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ABSTRACT

This report examines educational statistics in each of the 15 states that are members of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), comparing them to past SREB figures and to national averages in order to establish benchmarks and goals for educational performance. Major areas covered include: (1) Head Start enrollment; (2) eighth-grade math achievement; (3) college-credit courses offered at secondary schools; (4) dropout rates; (5) high school graduation rates; (6) credits earned by high school graduates; (7) vocational education; (8) number of adults with college degrees; (9) college effectiveness; (10) teacher education; (11) school effectiveness; (12) teacher and college faculty salaries; and (13) public funding of education. State and SREB area performance in each of these areas is discussed in terms of past performance, regional and national trends, and future goals. (MDM)

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Educational Benchmarks

1994

Joseph D. Creech

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SREB

Southern Regional Education Board

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INTRODUCTION

"We are seeing some progress but it seems slow, and there is not enough information about how we are doing."

A State Legislator

"Nobody gets an A+ on providing the information we need to monitor progress toward the education goals in our state."

A State Board of Education Member

"My feeling is that we don't have the support for improving education from legislative and business leaders that we once did. I am afraid they are ready to jump off the bandwagon because they don't believe they are getting the results they had hoped for."

A School Superintendent

"Not enough has happened. Why? Because of the lack of follow-through."

A State Legislator

"I have long been an advocate of patience when it comes to education . . . but I worry now that our patience is decaying into acceptance of business as usual."

A Corporate Chief Executive Officer

IS EDUCATION IMPROVING?

Is the education of young people and young adults improving? The answer to this straightforward question is vitally important to our future. The answer is not simple.

Concerned citizens are divided over whether education is improving. There is more agreement that education is not improving *fast enough*. We get mixed signals when we measure education's progress. More students pass basic skills tests, but these minimum skills are not good enough for today's world. More students are taking advanced courses in high school, but the great majority do not. As tests and standards change, test scores show gains and declines, and the public is confused. There are fewer high school dropouts today than ever, but many persons believe that the high school diploma has been devalued. States have put in place educational reforms, sometimes stacked on top of one another. At times, these reforms can overwhelm those who must make them work. Too often these reforms are never fully implemented or funded. Rarely mentioned is the fact that we are devoting about the same proportion of state budgets to education as we did ten years ago when education improvement moved to the front burner.

INTRODUCTION

State leaders face the challenge of sorting through education's mixed messages and charting a long-term course. A perspective that balances patience and persistence is required.

Leaders in the early 1980s were questioning the direction education was taking. In the 1990s, there is more certainty about the direction of higher expectations for all students—but there is growing concern about the pace. State citizens and leaders are looking for evidence that children are better prepared for the first grade; that student achievement is improving; that dropout rates are being reduced; that higher proportions of adults are high school graduates; that students in vocational programs are achieving at levels comparable to those in college preparatory programs; that teachers are better prepared; and that schools, colleges, and universities are more effective.

There are some signs that states in the SREB region are making progress. There are gains in student achievement; more students are being served by preschool and kindergarten programs; dropout rates are being reduced; high school students are taking more mathematics and science and more courses for college credit; and the gaps in achievement and educational attainment among ethnic groups are narrowing. But our pace is too slow, and there are too few reliable indicators of progress. In many cases the response to "How much progress are we making?" is "We just don't know."

The *Educational Benchmarks* series is SREB's way of keeping the spotlight on progress toward twelve important education goals endorsed in 1988 by the Southern Regional Education Board. *Educational Benchmarks 1994* reports on selected state actions and other indicators of progress in the effort to reach these goals by the year 2000.

Educational Benchmarks is based on the belief that to instill public confidence and sustain the momentum for improving education every state must set goals for education, measure progress toward achieving them, report results in clear terms to the public, and make a strong case for the support necessary to be successful. State leaders who follow this plan may find the balance between patience and persistence for educational improvement, and they may answer with more confidence the fundamental question, "Is education improving?"

READINESS FOR SCHOOL

Success in school depends on a strong start. Kindergarten and preschool programs that promote a healthy, learning environment for young children are among the smartest investments a state can make. Actions in the SREB states over the last six years show that—for the most part—state leaders are increasingly doing the smart thing.

All SREB states have public kindergarten. And all states supplement federally funded Head Start preschools with state programs that reach additional at-risk children. More children that ever are in these programs. Most states are also working to link health, social, and educational programs for these children, although bureaucratic turf battles can make progress painfully slow.

Despite Head Start and significant state commitments, early intervention programs still reach too few children who need them—and the need is great when one in four of our youngsters lives in poverty.

Few states can say how many children are ready for first grade in 1994. We do know that, even with the smart investments of the past six years, states will need to expand their efforts considerably in the next six years if they mean to have all children ready for school by the year 2000.

READINESS FOR SCHOOL

BY THE YEAR 2000—

All children will be ready for the first grade.

- More children are in preschool and kindergarten programs than five years ago—substantially more.
  - Every SREB state now requires that public kindergarten be available. Attending kindergarten is not mandatory in all SREB states, but more than 90 percent of the region's children attend public or private kindergarten before first grade.
  - In addition to Head Start, all SREB states have or are developing state-funded programs for children younger than kindergarten age. State-funded preschools serve more students than Head Start in Florida, South Carolina, and Texas. State programs in Arkansas and Maryland serve almost as many as Head Start.
- Most SREB states are trying to link health and social programs to schools.

- Only Georgia and South Carolina use statewide assessments of readiness for first grade. All states have guidelines that help schools decide which first graders need extra help to get ready for school.

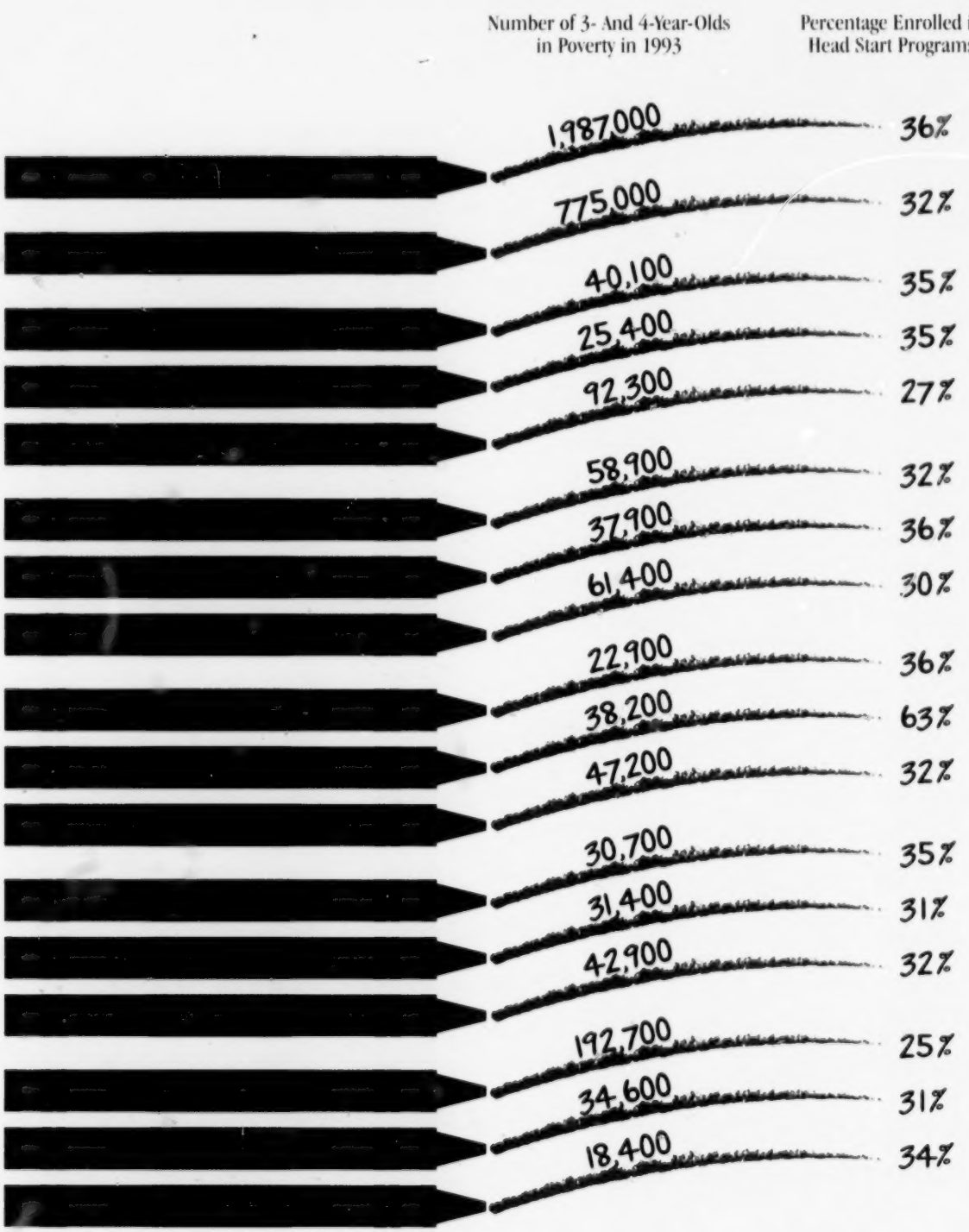
What actions are states taking to help children get ready for first grade?

- Many more preschool children are being served because of actions taken by SREB states. A larger percentage of children are in kindergarten, Head Start, and state-funded preschool programs than ever. The number of children who need extra help getting ready for school is still so large that the net effect of these actions has been viewed as modest or disappointing.
- One of four children in the region lives in poverty, and the percentage of children under 18 who live in poverty exceeds the national average in every SREB state except Maryland, North Carolina, and Virginia.
- A larger percentage of children are born to single teens than in the 1980s in every SREB state except Maryland and Texas.
- The percentage of children in the region who live in single-parent families is higher than the national average (27 percent versus 25 percent).

States are emphasizing efforts to link health and social services with educational programs in local communities, both to help children get ready for first grade and to make schools more ready for children who come from diverse backgrounds and have different needs.

Kentucky's Youth and Family Resource Centers coordinate health and social services at school sites. Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Tennessee use similar approaches. Georgia established a commission on families and children to develop coordination policies. Virginia created a multi-agency

CHILDREN IN POVERTY WHO ARE ENROLLED IN HEAD START



Source: Head Start Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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approach to deliver child care and childhood development services. Florida's Coordinating Council for Early Childhood Services coordinates programs for preschool children and their families offered by various public and private agencies. The West Virginia Governor's Cabinet on Children and Families helps develop comprehensive local programs. Communities design and implement plans, and the Cabinet can transfer resources among existing programs to help communities meet their objectives.

These states are trying to maximize the use of existing resources, promote collaborative planning among agencies, and change to a delivery system that is community-based and family-centered.

Who is an "at-risk" child?

All SREB states define what they mean by an "at-risk" child, but it is not easy to compare the percentages of at-risk children in each state. Every definition takes into account children living in poverty, but some states also count children with physical and mental disabilities, limited English proficiency, health problems, or the children of teenage parents.

About half the 15 SREB state departments of education estimate how many preschool and kindergarten children are at risk by their definition. These estimates range from 21 percent to 40 percent. State leaders should be concerned that half the SREB states have no estimates for at-risk children—and where there are estimates, they vary greatly.

How do states help children in the early grades?

All SREB states have programs to help unprepared first graders. Perhaps the most widely discussed development is the trend toward ungraded programs for kindergarten through third grade. Kentucky's Educational Reform Act mandates ungraded primary programs. Departments of education in Maryland and Tennessee provide technical assistance and in-service training to school districts that begin ungraded primary programs. Georgia's Special Instructional Assistance Program provides categorical grants to schools that start ungraded programs in kindergarten through third grade; schools must involve parents and offer staff development.

Many states are developing curriculum outlines and standards that students should meet before entering fourth grade (Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia, for example). States with ungraded primaries are identifying what students should know and be able to do in the fourth grade. Kentucky, Louisiana, and Tennessee are considering statewide assessments for promotion to fourth grade.

In most SREB states, student promotion and retention policies are left to local boards of education. State policies generally provide guidance—not mandates—and usually advise against retaining a student in the early grades, or more than once at any grade.

Ten SREB states collect data on the number and percentages of students who are not promoted. The percentages vary widely from

state to state and from school district to school district, reflecting the local nature of most promotion policies. Some districts set formal or informal ceilings on retention; others leave the decision to teacher judgment. The percentage of children retained in kindergarten ranges from 2 percent (Texas) to 8 percent (Louisiana). The percentage of first-grade students not promoted to second grade ranges from just over 1 percent (Mississippi) to more than 10 percent (South Carolina).

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Increasing student achievement is at the heart of efforts to improve education. Is student achievement rising? Generally, the answer is yes. But the improvements are modest, they are not across the board, and minority students still trail significantly.

There is a sense of disappointment—after years of effort to improve—that student achievement is not much higher today than five or 10 years ago. But there is also encouraging news.

Some of the best news about student achievement in the SREB states has to do with the courses students take in high school. A dramatically higher percentage of students now take four courses in English, and at least three in mathematics, science, and social studies. These are courses that go beyond the minimums of the general curriculum. Many more students are also earning college credit in Advanced Placement courses like calculus, physics, and advanced biology.

Even with these dramatic changes, only half the students in high school complete a challenging curriculum, and only one of every 16 high school juniors and seniors takes an Advanced Placement course.

State testing programs show that student performance today is about the same or somewhat better than five years ago. That is hardly a ringing endorsement, but neither is it a sign of failure, given the growing number of students who bring serious problems to school.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress provides some credible evidence that student performance is improving across the nation. But because of low federal funding, the National Assessment is available to states only at one or two grade levels, and in one or two subjects, every other year. If state leaders want to know whether student achievement is reaching important national levels, they will need to insist on more information from the National Assessment.

In an effort to boost student achievement, many SREB states are redefining standards for students and implementing "curriculum frameworks" and other initiatives that can strengthen the content of a school's curriculum, improve its methods of teaching, and help address some of the health and social problems today's students face. Some states are also developing additional ways to assess student performance, including portfolios and demonstrations.

BY THE YEAR 2000—

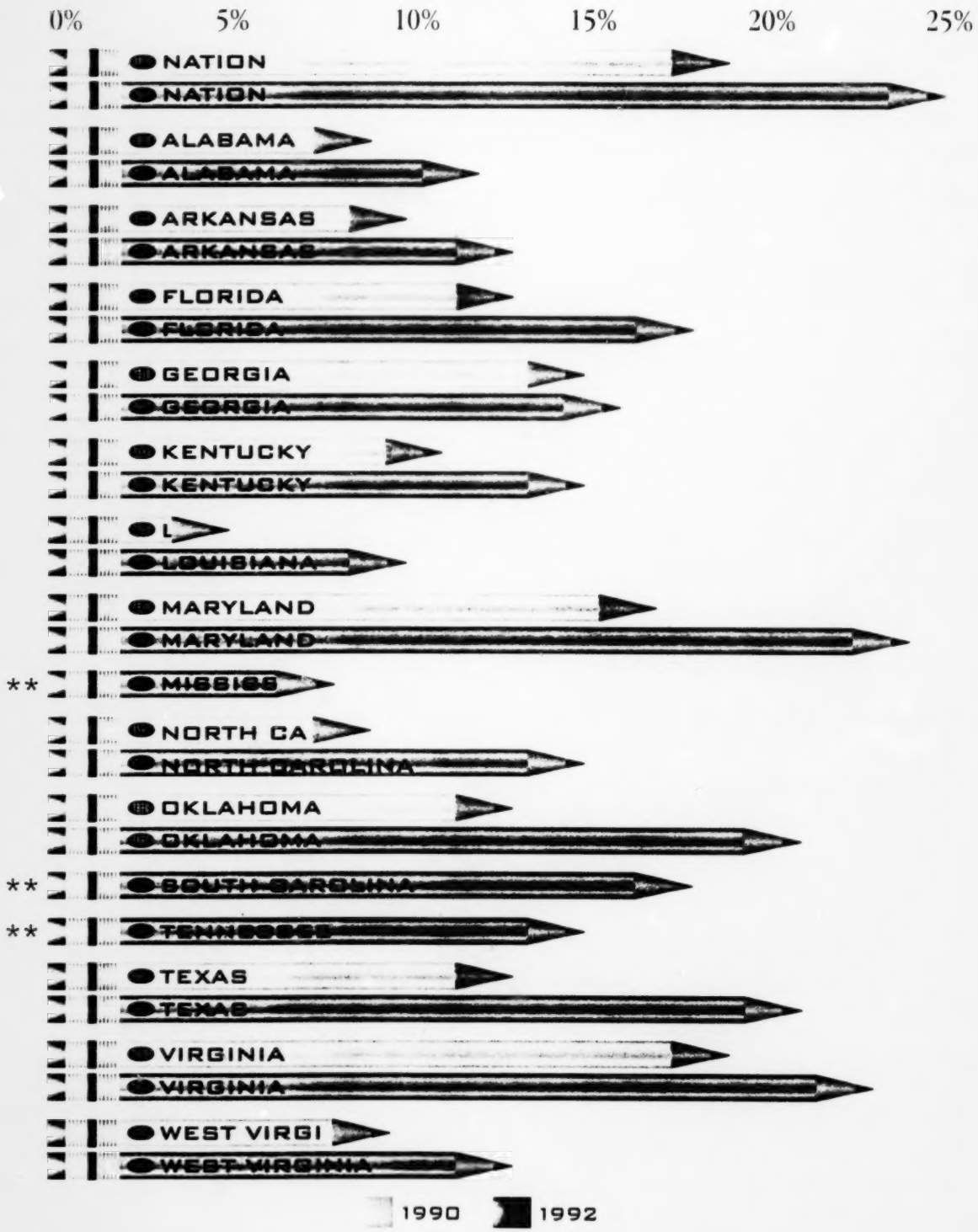
Student achievement for elementary and secondary students will be at national levels or higher.

- Results from state testing programs show that, in nearly every SREB state, student performance has remained about the same or improved slightly in the last five years.
- Substantially higher percentages of high school students are taking more challenging courses—and the South is outpacing the nation. In 1982, only 13 percent of high school graduates in the South earned 13 or more credits in core curriculum subjects (four English, three social studies, three science, and three mathematics—Algebra I or higher). By 1990, 54 percent of the high school graduates in the South completed these courses, compared to 40 percent nationally.[1]
- More than one-half of the public high schools in SREB states offer students an opportunity to earn college credit through the Advanced Placement Program®—up from 43 percent five years ago. Eighty-two percent more students take Advanced Placement courses.
- Even though larger numbers and percentages of high school seniors are taking the SAT and ACT college admissions tests, average scores in most SREB states are higher than five years ago.
- All SREB states have student achievement goals and programs to help students meet higher standards. Several states are developing more demanding tests and using new kinds of performance assessment to find out what students know and can do.
- Results from norm-referenced achievement tests in SREB states are now being reported by divisions such as upper quarter, middle quarters, and lower quarter. This can focus efforts on helping *all* students make progress.

- There continue to be large gaps in achievement of students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. In spite of achievement gains made by blacks and Hispanics on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the Scholastic Assessment Test, and the American College Test, their scores continue to be significantly lower than scores for whites, and the gap is not closing fast enough.
- Higher proportions of eighth-grade students in SREB states scored at or above the proficient level in mathematics on the National Assessment of Educational Progress in 1992 than in 1990, but regional performance is still below the national average. This is the best comparable state and national achievement information.
- The percentage of students from SREB states who score in the lowest quarter on national norm-referenced tests continues to be too high—and the percentage who score in the highest quarter is too low.
- Only six SREB states (Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia) require all students to complete Algebra I or its equivalent to graduate from high school.

HOW MANY 8TH-GRADERS ARE SUCCEEDING IN MATH?

Percent of 8th-Grade Students Who Scored At or Above the Proficient Level*
on the 1990 and 1992 NAEP Mathematics Assessment



*Includes percentage scoring at Proficient and Advanced Levels on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.
**Mississippi, South Carolina, and Tennessee did not participate in the 1990 Assessment.
Source: National Center for Education Statistics.

What policies and programs have states developed to raise student achievement?

Every SREB state has student achievement goals and programs to help students meet higher standards. Legislatures and state boards of education took a variety of actions, including:

- Raising student performance on tests to meet or exceed national averages;
- Reducing the achievement gap between disadvantaged and other students;
- Requiring all students to complete Algebra I or its equivalent to graduate from high school;
- Increasing enrollment in upper-level science and mathematics courses and the percentage of students who complete these courses;
- Improving promotion rates in grades 9-12;
- Increasing the percentage of students continuing their education after high school;
- Increasing job placement of students completing vocational programs;
- Increasing the number of credits required for high school graduation (all SREB states require at least 20 credits for graduation—up from about 18 a decade ago);
- Requiring an exit examination to graduate from high school and raise the standards on these examinations;
- Establishing statewide standards for what students are expected to know and be able to do in each grade;
- Funding the Advanced Placement program;
- Eliminating the high school general track and requiring all students to complete an academic or vocational program;
- Investing in technology to improve instruction and student learning.

The United States Department of Education is funding the development of voluntary national content and performance standards in the arts, history, civics and government, science, English, language arts, geography, and foreign languages. *Content standards* define what students should know and be able to do. *Performance standards* identify levels of achievement and show how well students demonstrate their competency in different subjects. The first of these content standards are being released this year. Content standards for mathematics were developed earlier by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

The Southern Arts Federation has specific objectives for including arts in school curriculum. The Federation's goal is that "all students shall receive an education in the arts that fosters an understanding of and provides opportunities to participate in the visual, performing, and literary arts."

A survey of SREB states conducted by the Arts Federation shows that:

- Visual arts and music are the disciplines receiving the most emphasis in funding, teacher training, and instructional time in SREB states;
- There is no standardization from state to state in funding, teacher training, or instructional time in the arts;
- Most arts education takes place in the early elementary grades and almost none occurs in the high school years;
- Arts are perceived and taught as "extra" areas of study;

- Teacher preparation programs rarely include instruction in the use of arts for teaching higher-order skills, and administrators are not usually informed about the importance of the arts in their training programs.

The Southern Arts Federation has produced a report on indicators of a high-quality education in the arts. States can use this information as they develop curriculum frameworks and content and performance standards for students.

Some SREB states are developing or revising curriculum frameworks that outline how subject matter (what students should know) is linked from grade to grade. These frameworks are blueprints that can be used to develop classroom materials and lessons for a single subject or combinations of subjects. Arkansas, Florida, and Louisiana are among the 23 states receiving federal grants to develop such frameworks. Alabama, Kentucky, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas also have efforts underway to revise curriculum frameworks and learning objectives.

Georgia, Texas, and North Carolina passed legislation in 1993 to expand the Advanced Placement program by paying for students' examination fees and the training of teachers for Advanced Placement courses. The Virginia Satellite Educational Network provides Advanced Placement instruction to many schools in that state. Oklahoma State University also delivers Advanced Placement instruction by satellite to schools in Oklahoma and other states.

Most SREB states have made substantial investments in educational technology. Kentucky, Florida, Texas, and West Virginia are examples of states that have linked their investment in technology specifically to school reform. The Kentucky Educational Technology System grew out of the Kentucky Education Reform Act and is tied directly to its instructional and student achievement goals. Florida's School Technology Incentive Awards program provides grants to schools based on their plans to use technology to improve instruction.

Texas' Long Range Plan for Educational Technology was the first in the nation. Funds are allocated to schools on the basis of how they will use technology in the classroom to increase student access to high quality instruction, required courses of study, and information resources. West Virginia is phasing in computers, computer software, and computer training for teachers—grade-by-grade in kindergarten through sixth grade.

In 1994, SREB states will spend over $600 million for educational technology. Texas ($117 million), Georgia ($85 million), Florida ($82 million), and Tennessee ($78 million) will spend the most.

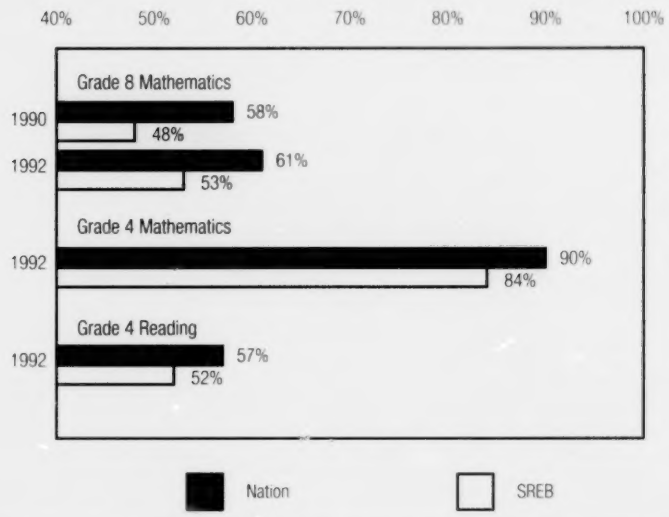
What evidence is there that student achievement is improving?

The National Assessment of Educational Progress

All 15 SREB states participated in the 1992 National Assessment of Educational Progress Trial State Assessment Program. All except Mississippi, South Carolina, and Tennessee participated in the 1990 assessment.

The National Assessment Governing Board has established three levels of performance (basic, proficient, and advanced) for

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO SCORED AT OR ABOVE THE "BASIC" LEVEL ON THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS TRIAL STATE ASSESSMENT



National Center for Education Statistics, 1993

reporting results on the National Assessment of Educational Progress for grades 4, 8, and 12:

- *Basic* means students have partially mastered the knowledge and skills that are fundamental at each grade;
- *Proficient* means that students have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter and are well prepared for the next level of schooling;
- *Advanced* means students have shown superior performance beyond proficiency at their grade level;

A higher percentage of eighth-graders in Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia scored at or above the *basic* level in 1992 than in 1990. Yet only two SREB states—Oklahoma and Virginia—had more students at or above the basic level than the nation.

The proportion of students scoring at or above *proficient* rose between 1990 and 1992 in all 12 SREB states that participated in both assessments. Even so, no SREB state had more students scoring at or above the proficient level than the nation.

In one-third of the SREB states (Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina), more than half the fourth-grade students scored below the *basic* level on the reading portion of the National Assessment. Only two states had at least a quarter of their fourth-graders scoring at or above the *proficient* level—Oklahoma (25 percent) and Virginia (28 percent).

In most instances, blacks and Hispanics showed more improvement over the two-year period than whites—but the gap in performance levels continues to be substantial. For example, the percentage of whites scoring at or above the basic level in grade 8 mathematics ranges from 55 percent in West Virginia to 76 percent in Texas; the percentage of blacks from 18 percent (Arkansas) to 35 percent (Virginia); the percentage of Hispanics from 12 percent (Mississippi) to 46 percent (Oklahoma).

The gaps between levels of achievement for whites, blacks, and Hispanics are demonstrated not only in the National Assessment results but on other national tests including the SAT, the ACT, and statewide testing programs. For SREB states to develop a competitive workforce these gaps must be closed—and closed at a more rapid rate.

State testing programs

Several different tests that give comparisons to national averages are used by SREB states to measure student achievement at different grade levels. We can call these "national tests" even though none of them are used in every state.

Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, and South Carolina all use some form of the Stanford Achievement Tests; Georgia, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Virginia give the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (Virginia also gives the Tests of Achievement and Proficiency at grade 11); Louisiana uses the California Achievement Tests; Tennessee and West Virginia use the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills; Florida gives the Grade Ten Assessment Test, Maryland, Kentucky, and Texas have developed their own tests; Kentucky is linking its tests to the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Measuring student achievement against a national average is not as straightfoward as it might seem. Many states can report that their students score "above the national average" in some or all subjects and grades on a national test. These reports raise some understandable skepticism. While these tests have several problems, the primary problem is that they simply compare students to one another; they do not compare students to a set of performance standards. Among the national tests, only the National Assessment of Educational Progress reports the percentage of students in different grades who have reached certain levels of performance in various subjects.

Further complicating an overall analysis of the results from these national tests is that they are administered to students in different grade levels in different states. For example, the Stanford Achievement Tests are given to students in grades 4 and 8 in Alabama, but to students in grades 4, 7, and 10 in Arkansas.

While even the most frequently used national tests do not enable a state to easily compare its results to those in other states, a state can measure its progress from year-to-year and over longer periods of time. The 1993 results for fourth-grade students in Mississippi can be compared to 1989 results, for example. Results from the 11 states that used national tests in 1993 show that student performance is either the same as or better than it was five years ago.

The courses students take in high school

Substantially higher percentages of high school students are taking more challenging courses. In 1982, only 13 percent of high school graduates in the South earned 13 or more credits in core curriculum subjects (four English, three social studies, three science, and three mathematics—Algebra I or higher). In 1990, 54 percent of the high school graduates in the South completed these courses.

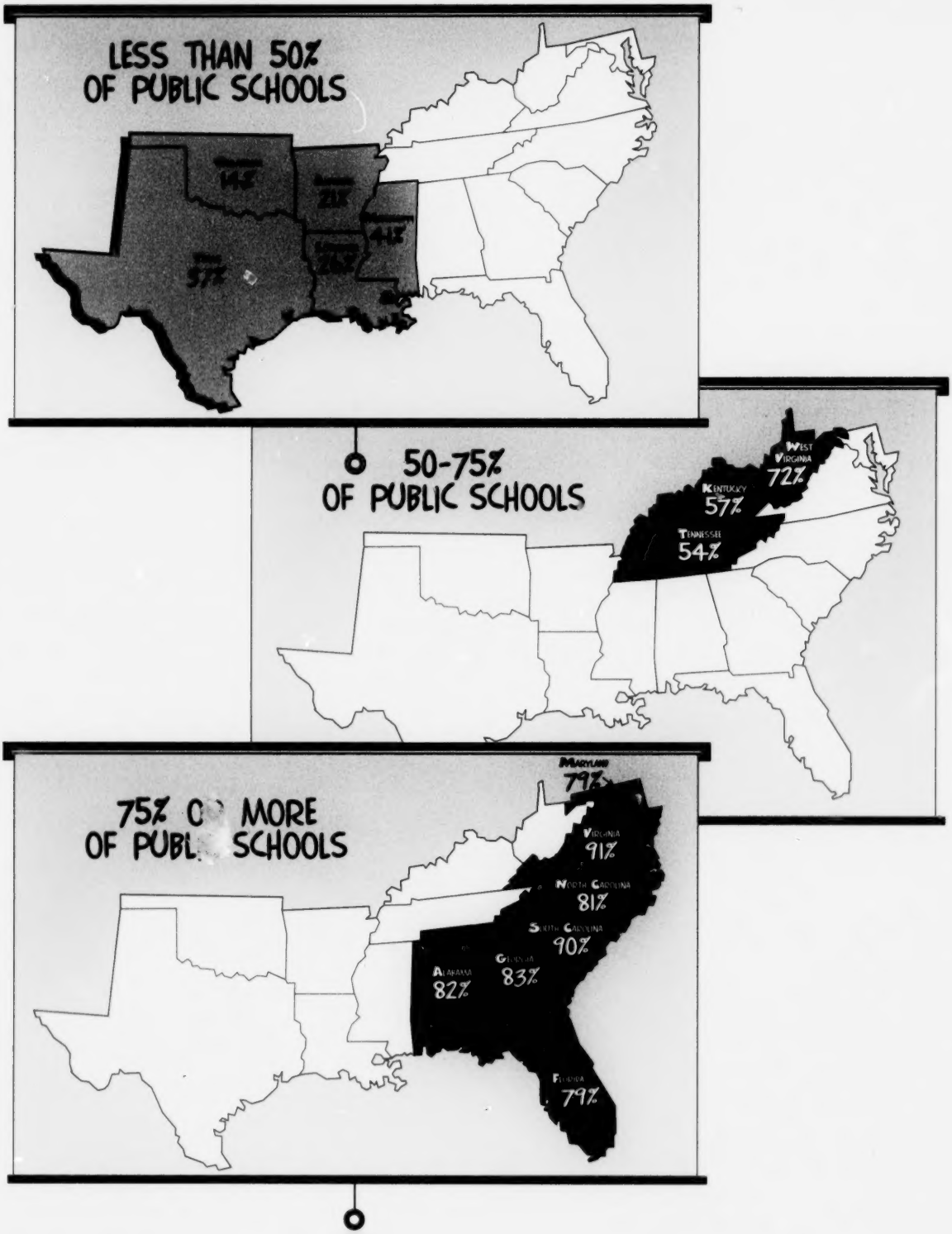
Arkansas, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia eliminated the general curriculum and now require all students to complete a curriculum with either an academic (college preparatory) or vocational/career emphasis.

Students who take the SAT and the ACT report that they are now completing more college preparatory courses in high school.

Only six SREB states (Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia) require all students to complete Algebra I or its equivalent to graduate from high school.

HOW MANY SCHOOLS OFFER COLLEGE-CREDIT COURSES?

Percent of Public Secondary Schools* Offering Advanced Placement Courses



Sources: "The College Board Advanced Placement Examination Statistics," 1989 and 1993.
*Secondary schools are all public schools consisting of grades 7-12 except for those that are only middle schools (grades 7-9).

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The Advanced Placement program

The number of high school students who earn college credit in the Advanced Placement program has increased dramatically in all SREB states since 1988. The most remarkable increases are in states that provide financial support and incentives for schools and students. New legislative initiatives in Georgia, North Carolina, and Texas greatly expand Advanced Placement programs. Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, South Carolina, and West Virginia began financial support of Advanced Placement programs in the mid-1980s.

The number of public high schools offering Advanced Placement courses has increased in every SREB state—and by 20 percent or more in the last five years in Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Fifty-four percent of public high schools in SREB states now have Advanced Placement programs compared to 43 percent five years ago. Ninety percent of the public schools in South Carolina and Virginia participate in the program, so do at least 70 percent of the public schools in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, and West Virginia.

The number of public school students in SREB states who complete Advanced Placement examinations has reached 112,000—82 percent more than in 1987. More students are taking at least two Advanced Placement courses. SREB states account for 36 percent of the national growth in Advanced Placement since 1987.

Students in SREB states earned scores of 3, 4, or 5 (a score of 3 is generally high enough to earn college credit) on almost twice as many Advanced Placement examinations in 1993 as in 1987.

College admissions tests

More high school seniors are taking the SAT and ACT than ever before. When higher proportions of students take such tests, the average scores usually decline. This is *not* the case in most SREB states, even though the percentage of high school seniors taking these tests has increased significantly.

In the seven SREB states where at least 50 percent of high school seniors take the SAT, average scores are the same or higher than five years ago in four states (Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Texas), and lower in three states (Florida, Georgia, and Virginia). Only Maryland is above the national average. In those states (Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and West Virginia) where the ACT is the predominant test used for college admissions and placement, average scores are slightly higher or about the same as five years ago.

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1 National Center for Education Statistics, *The 1990 High School Transcript Study Tabulations: Comparative Data on Credits Earned and Demographics for 1990, 1987, and 1982 High School Graduates*, Table 76, page A-191, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C., April 1993.

2 The Advanced Placement program provides a way for high schools to offer college-level courses to talented students. The program represents high quality content and student performance and provides a national standard for judging student performance.

DROPOUT RATE

SREB states are working harder on the school dropout problem. We know that from the growing numbers of plans and programs. And there is evidence that the dropout rate is going down faster than the national rate. About 84 of 100 young adults have a high school credential—but this means millions still do not.

Without better information about individual students who drop out, states may be approaching a dropout reduction ceiling that could prevent further progress on a problem that results in too many young people leaving high school without a diploma.

Better information can help states design programs to keep more students in school. But after several years of work with the National Center for Education Statistics, states have not yet produced comparable dropout information.

Schools are most important in reducing the dropout rate, but it takes more than a special program in the corner of a school to solve the problem. The solution begins with a commitment to provide challenging educational programs designed to reach every student. The solution will also require better coordination of services among schools and other government agencies that deal with children and families—coordination that state and local leaders may have to insist on.

DROPOUT RATE

BY THE YEAR 2000—

The school dropout rate will be reduced by one-half.

- All SREB states have programs to prevent students from dropping out of school, but few of them have been underway long enough to determine their full impact.
- Dropout rates in SREB states and in the nation are declining:
  - For SREB states, 12.4 percent of 16- to 24-year-olds in the region were not enrolled in school and did not have a high school diploma or its equivalent in 1992—down from 15.2 percent in 1985. A 1 percent decline means that more than 100,000 additional young people have completed high school.
  - For the nation, the percentage decreased to 11 percent.
  - While the percentage of 16- to 24-year-olds who are not in school and do not have a high school diploma remains above the national average (12.4 percent versus 11 percent), the SREB states declined at twice the rate of the nation from 1990 to 1992.
- SREB states that reported annual dropout rates reported a decline in their rates.

- States do not report dropout rates based on a uniform definition.
- A key to reducing the dropout rate is better information on individual students: better early warning systems to identify potential dropouts; and actions by states, districts, and schools using this information. In most states, comprehensive systems to produce such information are not yet in place.

What do we know about dropout rates and students who drop out of school?

Measuring dropout rates is more complicated than it appears. For example, which of the following represents the dropout rate for the nation: (a) 4.4 percent? (b) 11 percent? (c) 6.2 percent? *Answer:* All of the above.

Any of these answers is correct because there are different ways to define a "dropout" and calculate dropout rates. The *annual* dropout rate is 4.4 percent; it tells how many students leave high school each year and how each year's rates compare to previous years. *Status* dropout rates refer to the percentage of different age groups in the population who are not enrolled in school and do not have a high school diploma or its equivalent—currently about 11 percent of the 16- to 24-year-old age group. *Cohort* rates tell what percentage of students in a particular grade drop out of school over time. (For example, 6.2 percent of 1988 eighth-graders dropped out by 1992.)

States may report any of these rates—or other rates, based on their own definitions. For this reason, dropout rates may not be comparable from state-to-state, but it is pos-

sible for each state to compare year-to-year changes in its own rate. The percentage of students dropping out each year ranges from 3 to 5 percent, depending on each state's definitions and methods of calculating the rates. Each percent represents thousands of students.

COHORT DROPOUT RATES FOR 1980 AND 1990 TENTH-GRADERS[1]

	1980	1990
Total	10.9 %	6.2 %
White	9.7	5.0
Black	12.6	7.9
Hispanic	15.6	12.1

All SREB states (except Kentucky) are participating in a national project to reach a common definition of a school "dropout," and a uniform method of collecting data and calculating a dropout rate. This project began in the late 1980s, but the first report is yet to be released.

U.S. Department of Education studies of 10th-grade students in 1980 and 1990 show that the number leaving school between grades 10 and 12 dropped by over 40 percent; by 48 percent for whites, 37 percent for blacks, and 23 percent for Hispanics.

Students from low-income families are more likely to drop out of school than students from middle- and high-income families. But 60 percent of students who drop out of school are not from low-income families.

Blacks and Hispanics are more likely than whites to leave school before getting a diploma. But more than one-half of students who drop out of school are white.

Dropout rates are higher for students who repeat one or more grades than for those who do not repeat a grade (19.8 versus 9.4 percent). But 70 percent of students who drop out have not repeated a grade.

Why do students drop out of school?

The most common reasons students gave for dropping out of school between grades 10 and 12 were that they did not like school, were failing in school, could not keep up with school work, or felt like they did not belong. But many students cited other factors:

- One in five said he or she could not work and go to school at the same time;
- One in 10 had to support a family;
- One in four girls who dropped out of high school cited pregnancy as the reason.[2]

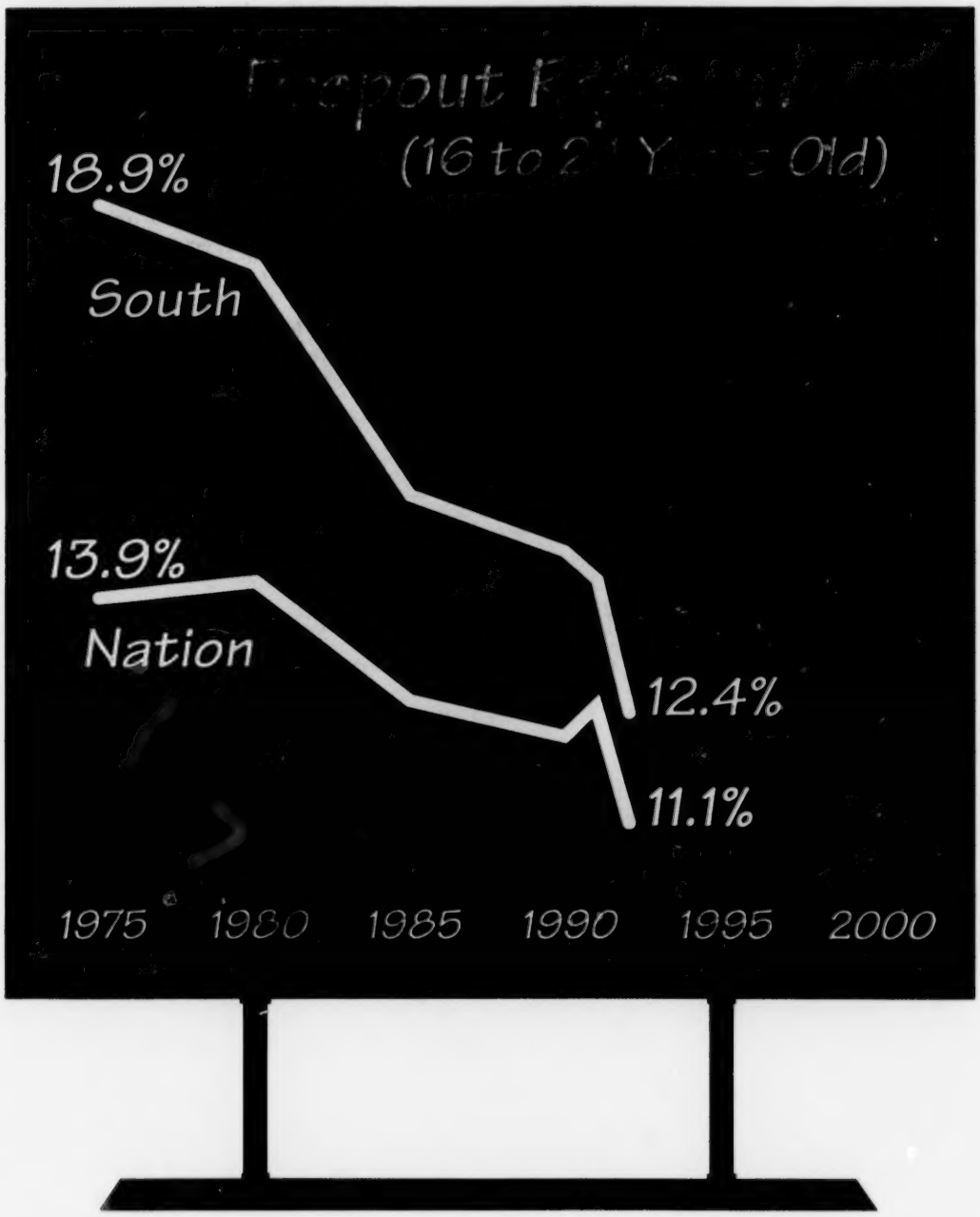
These explanations reinforce the notion that teachers and school administrators cannot solve the dropout problem alone. Community agencies, businesses, and parents have to be part of the solution.

What actions are states taking to reduce the dropout rate?

Every SREB state has statewide plans to reduce the dropout rate. The plans generally include:

- Financial assistance to help schools and communities develop dropout prevention programs;

DROPOUT RATES ARE DROPPING



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Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students," October (various years), Current Population Reports, Series P-20, and unpublished tabulations as reported in "Dropout Rates in the United States: 1992".

- Requirements that local school districts establish goals and develop plans for reducing dropout rates;
- Workshops to help teachers and counselors develop dropout prevention strategies and activities;
- On-site visits and reviews of schools with chronic dropout problems to provide school leaders with specific recommendations;
- Information on successful dropout prevention practices.

Most SREB states now have policies, regulations, or laws that help schools reduce absenteeism. In 13 SREB states, schools work with local judicial systems to intervene early in truancy problems; in 12 of these states, parents can be prosecuted if their children have excessive absences from school.

Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia will deny or suspend drivers' licenses to school-age youth who are not in school or who do not have a high school diploma or its equivalent.

Alternatives to traditional high schools have been established to recruit students who drop out (or appear likely to drop out) into programs that lead to a high school diploma or its equivalent. These programs include:

- Year-round instruction in basic skills and academic courses;
- Career and employment counseling;
- Job placement services;
- Mentors to provide positive role models, encouragement, and extra help;
- Hands-on and computer-based learning experiences.

The National Guard's Youth Challenge program is one example of how different agencies can work together to provide an alternative education for students who drop out of school. The program—now in the pilot stage in ten states including Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Oklahoma, and West Virginia—is for 16- to 18-year-olds who have left school. Students take high school mathematics, reading, and writing; they learn how to handle finances and apply for jobs; and they complete a community service program and training in leadership and physical fitness.

The states and the nation still do not have information systems that will produce comparable state data on high school completion and dropout rates. While most SREB states know the ethnic background and gender of students who drop out, few have additional information about age, grade point average, achievement test scores, or the number of grades or subjects failed. The National Center for Education Statistics is working toward a voluntary state and local student record system. Such a system—or significantly better state systems—that provide better student data are needed.

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1 U.S. Department of Education, NCES, *High School and Beyond Study: Sophomore Cohort, First Followup; National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988, First and Second Followup Surveys*, as reported in *Dropout Rates in the United States: 1992*, September 1993.

2 U.S. Office of Education, NCES, *NELS-88 Followup Surveys*, as reported in *Dropout Rates in the United States: 1992*, September 1993.

ADULT EDUCATION

If we could wave a magic "policy wand" and enable all high school students to graduate, we would still be left with millions of adults who have never finished high school—adults who may lack the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in today's job market.

SREB states have attacked this problem vigorously in recent years, investing in adult and workplace literacy programs, often in partnerships with business and industry, unions, and higher education. The number of persons earning GEDs has grown nearly 20 percent in five years. Black and Hispanic adults in the SREB region are earning high school diplomas at rates higher than blacks and Hispanics nationally.

Even so, for 90 percent of adults to have a high school credential by the year 2000, SREB states will need to almost double the current pace at which 25- to 34-year-olds are earning high school equivalency degrees. The two million young adults in this group are most likely to have the personal and financial motivation needed to earn a GED credential.

BY THE YEAR 2000—

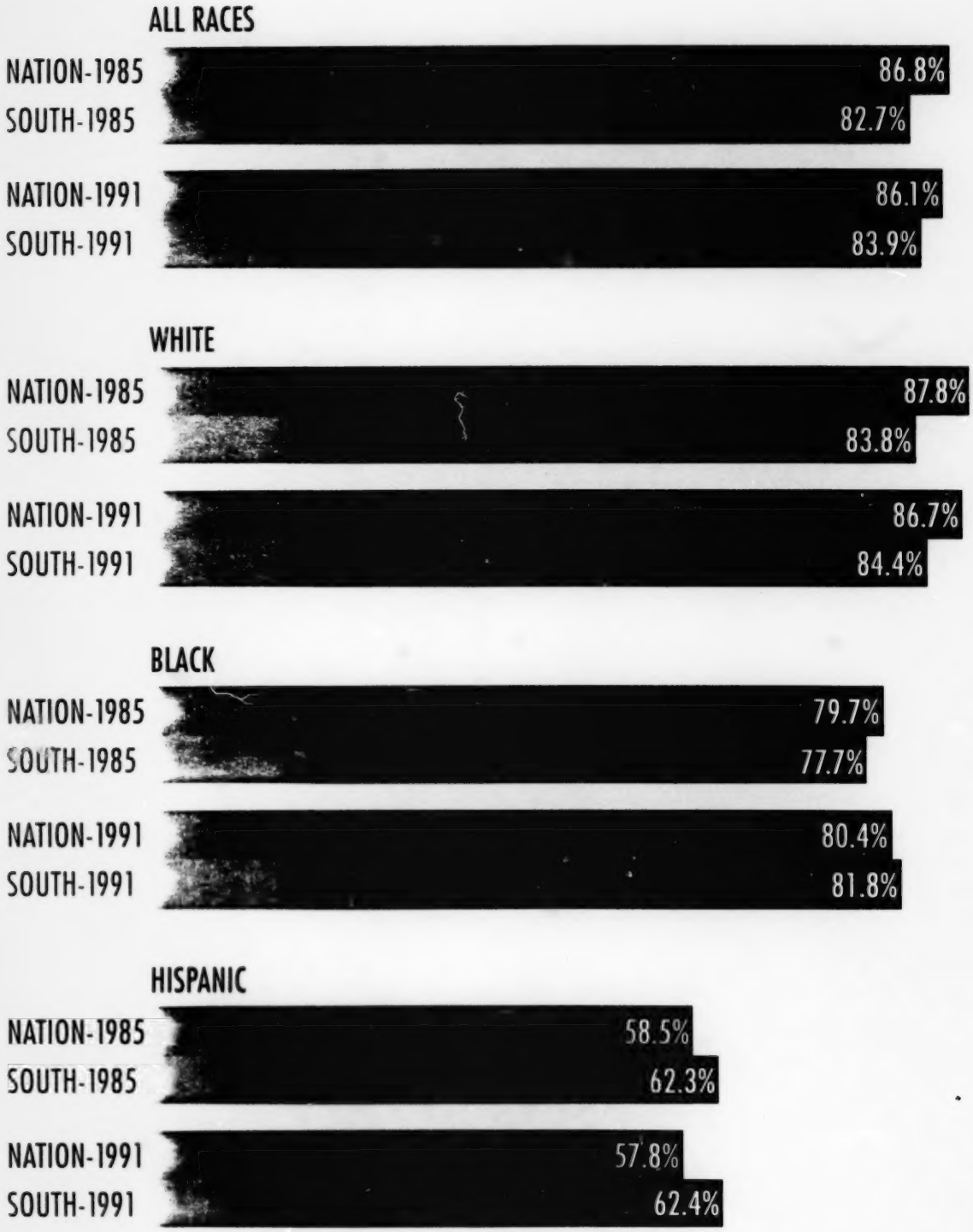
90 percent of adults will have a high school diploma or equivalency.

- A larger percentage of adults in SREB states have high school diplomas or GEDs—General Education Development credentials—than a decade ago.
- About 86 percent of the nation's 25- to 34-year-olds have a high school diploma or credential; 84 percent of those who live in the South do.
- Especially significant are the gains in the percentage of blacks in the South who are high school graduates. The gaps between whites and blacks are closing. The percentages of blacks and Hispanics in the South who are high school graduates are now above the national averages for blacks and Hispanics.
- Almost 190,000 persons in SREB states earned a GED credential in 1992—33,000 more than in 1989. About 45,000 of these persons were 25 to 34 years old.

- About two million young adults in SREB states do not have a high school diploma or GED credential. To reach a goal of 90 percent having a high school credential, will require doubling the number of young adults earning a GED award.
- Almost one-half of the students who drop out of school will complete a high school diploma or GED credential within six years. The best time to help persons earn a high school diploma is while they are in school; the next best time is when they are young adults.
- Progress toward the goal of 90 percent of adults with a high school diploma will obviously be affected by the high school dropout rate. Even if SREB states are able to reduce their dropout rates by one-half, there will still be hundreds of thousands of young adults who will not have earned a high school diploma.
- Less than one-half of the SREB states have conducted a statewide assessment of adult literacy and only three (Florida, Louisiana, and Texas) participated in the most recent National Adult Literacy Survey. Adults in these states have lower literacy levels than their peers across the nation.

WHO'S COMPLETED HIGH SCHOOL?

(Persons 25 to 34 Years Old)



Notes: "White" and "Black" refer to non-Hispanic persons. Hispanics can be of any race. U.S. Census Bureau Southern Region includes 15 SREB states, Delaware, and the District of Columbia.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Current Population Reports," Series P-20, "Educational Attainment in the United States," 1984, 1987, 1991, and 1992.

What actions have SREB states taken to increase the percentage of adults with a high school diploma?

Every SREB state has programs to encourage adults without a high school diploma to return to school or earn a General Education Development credential.

All SREB states have taken actions to support and encourage workplace literacy programs. Examples of these efforts include:

- Tax credits to employers for their support of workplace literacy programs (Alabama);
- Collaborative efforts between labor unions and departments of education (such as Project LEAP—the Labor Education Achievement Program—in Maryland);
- Providing specialists who assist business leaders in setting up programs with local adult education and literacy programs (Virginia);
- Technology to help adults learn to read and write more effectively (the Georgia Satellite Literacy Program);
- On-site training to employees through community colleges and technical institutes (North Carolina).

COLLEGE READINESS

A little more than 10 years ago, only 7 percent of the South's high school graduates finished a challenging college preparatory curriculum. Today, about 40 percent do.

Despite this dramatic increase in the number of high school students taking college preparatory courses, one-third of the college students in most SREB states still need some remedial coursework as freshmen. In some states, one-half of entering students take at least one remedial course.

Some of the discrepancy can be explained by older students entering colleges years after graduating from high school. Also, the quality of college prep coursework varies greatly among high schools across the region. And while it is true that nearly 40 percent of today's high school graduates finish a college prep curriculum, 55 to 60 percent go on to college. That means at least 15 to 20 percent enter college without enough academic preparation.

The current trend toward eliminating general coursework and directing all students into either college prep or an academically challenging vocational or "tech prep" curriculum is important in preparing more students for college—if education leaders follow through and focus more attention on what is being taught and learned in these curricula. Simply stated, we know that more students are enrolled in English, mathematics, and science courses, but are we certain about what they are studying and learning in these courses?

Colleges and universities have a part to play as well. Although some colleges and universities talk with high schools about academic course content and what it means to be prepared for college, many more need to do so. Academic alliances, where faculty from colleges and schools share a mutual interest in a particular subject or discipline, can be one important vehicle.

BY THE YEAR 2000—

Four of every five students entering college will be ready to begin college-level work.

- Nearly all four-year colleges and universities in SREB states now specify a series of courses for admission. They typically include:
  - Four years of English;
  - Three years of mathematics (Algebra I and higher);
  - Two or three years of science (including at least one laboratory science);
  - Three years of social studies;
  - Two years of foreign language.

  In what may be the most dramatic result of education reforms during the 1980s, the South more than quadrupled the proportion of high school seniors completing these college preparatory courses. In 1982, only 9 percent of high school graduates in the nation completed this college preparatory program; only 7 percent of graduates in the South did. In 1990, 21 percent of the nation's high school graduates and 38 percent of the high school graduates in the South completed these college preparatory courses.[1]

- More high school seniors are taking college admissions tests, and they are taking more college preparatory courses—clear signs that efforts to encourage more students to attend college are working. Average scores on the SAT and ACT are the same or higher than five years ago in 10 of the 15 SREB states, even though significantly more students are taking the tests, and this almost always lowers the average scores.

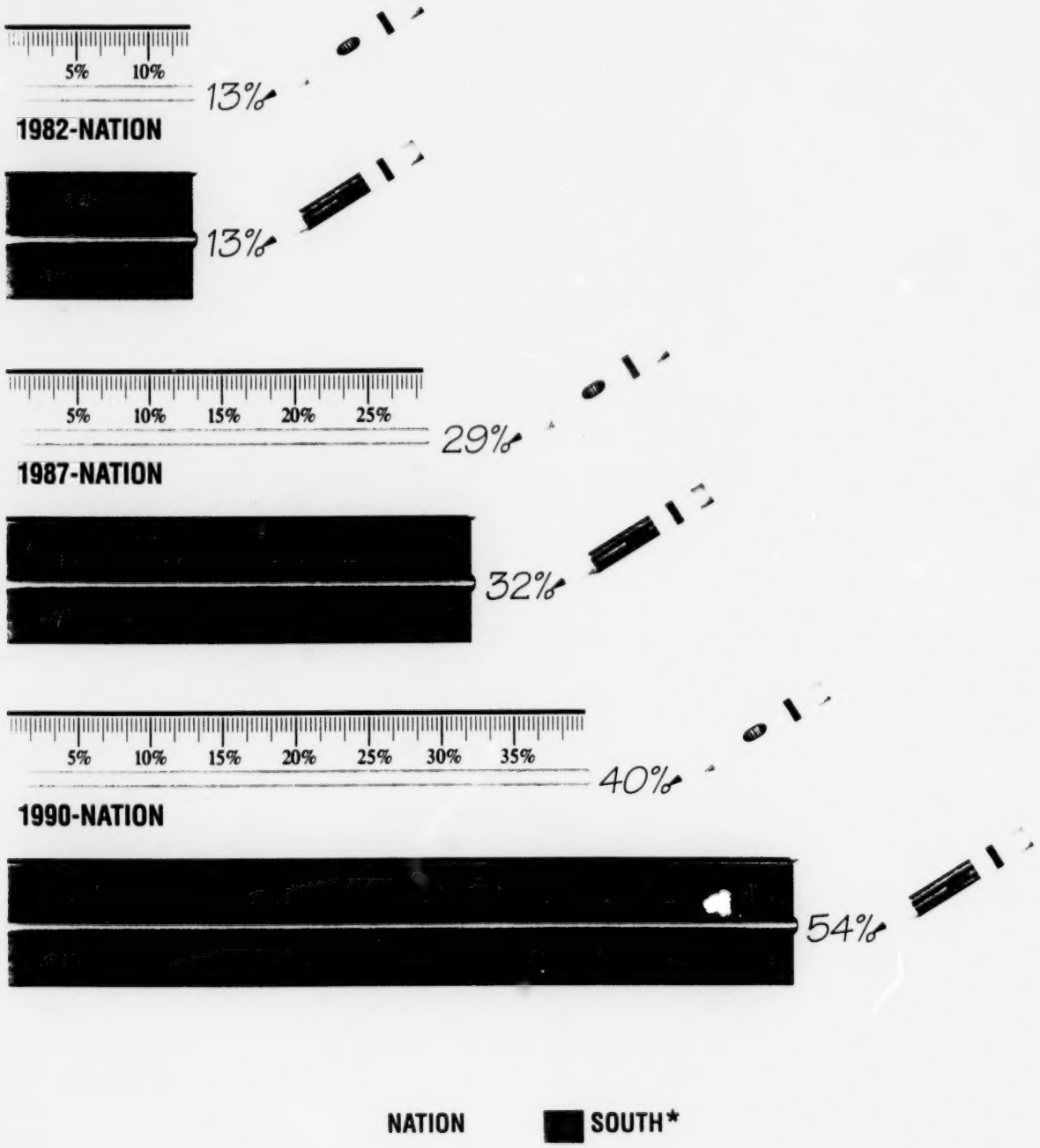
- Nearly all SREB states now have better systems to monitor whether entering college students are placed in college-level or remedial courses. Most colleges and universities provide annual reports to high schools on the placement and performance of their graduates.

- About one-third of entering college freshmen need remedial work in reading, writing, or mathematics in most SREB states. The proportion is higher at open-door community colleges than at four-year colleges.
  - Almost half of the SREB states have four of five students entering four-year colleges and universities ready to begin college-level work. Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia report that less than 20 percent of entering freshmen at public four-year colleges need additional instruction before taking college-level courses.
  - In two-year colleges in SREB states, typically more than 40 percent of entering students are enrolled in one or more remedial courses.

- More entering college freshmen need remedial help in mathematics than in any other subject. This is not surprising. While almost 60 percent of high school graduates enter two- and four-year colleges, only 40 percent complete three or more mathematics courses at or above the level of Algebra I. Students who do not take a mathematics course their senior year in high school greatly increase the likelihood they will have to take a remedial mathematics course as a college freshman.

THE SOUTH LEADS THE WAY

More High School Graduates Earn At Least
Four English, Three Social Studies, Three Science, and Three Math Credits



*South includes SREB states, Delaware, and the District of Columbia.
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, "The 1990 High School Transcript Study Tabulations: Comparative Data on Credits Earned and Demographics for 1990, 1987, and 1982 High School Graduates," April 1993.

What are states doing to help prepare students for college?

Every SREB state requires or recommends a core of academic courses for admission to four-year colleges and universities. State policies in Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia *require* the core courses to be completed in order to be admitted to a four-year college or university.

Alabama, Arkansas, Texas, and Virginia recommend a minimum core of courses. Many individual institutions establish their own requirements, which often exceed the minimums required by state policy. More demanding admissions requirements encourage high schools to strengthen their college preparatory curricula. A stronger college preparatory curriculum means more students will be prepared for college-level work and that fewer should need remedial courses in college.

Among the seven SREB states where the SAT is taken by most high school seniors going to college, average scores in Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Texas are the same or higher than in 1988. Only Maryland's average scores were at or above the national average. In the eight states where the ACT is taken by most seniors, average scores are higher than five years ago in Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, and West Virginia. None of the eight states had average ACT scores above the national average.

If more students are taking college preparatory courses, why haven't admissions test scores gone up and the number of college remedial courses gone down?

Significantly more students are taking more college preparatory courses, yet average scores on college admissions tests have not changed much, and the percentage of students who need remedial courses when they enter college continues to be large. Why?

There are several possible explanations and no certain answers.

Many more high school graduates are taking college admissions tests. Average scores on such tests tend to be lower when a higher proportion of students is being tested. Therefore, it is noteworthy that average scores on the ACT and SAT in most SREB states have either gone up or remained about the same even though more students take the tests.

Although a significantly larger percentage of high school graduates in SREB states are taking more college preparatory courses in high school, the percentage taking college admissions tests and enrolling in colleges and universities is even higher. For example, states report that 55 to 60 percent of high school graduates go on to college. At least 50 percent in each state take a college admissions test. But less than 40 percent complete the typical college preparatory curriculum recommended or required by four-year colleges and universities.

How students are placed into remedial courses varies among states and colleges—as do definitions of what is "remedial."

MINIMUM COLLEGE PREPARATORY COURSES REQUIRED OR RECOMMENDED FOR ADMISSION TO PUBLIC FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, SREB STATES

	English	Mathematics (Algebra I or higher)	Social Studies	Science	Foreign Language	Computer Studies
National Commission on Educational Excellence[1]	**4**	**3**	**3**	**3**	**2**	**.5**
Alabama *	4 †	3 †	4 †	3 †	2 †	
Arkansas *	4 †	3 †	3 †	2 †	1 †	
Florida	4	3	3	3	2	
Georgia	4	3	3	3	2	
Kentucky	4	3	2	2		
Louisiana	†	†	†	†	†	
Maryland	4	3	3	2	2	
Mississippi	4	3	3	3	2	.5
North Carolina	4	3	2	3	2 *	
Oklahoma	4	3	2	2	2 *	
South Carolina	4	3	3	2	2	1
Tennessee	4	3	2	2	2	
Texas *	4 †	3 †	4 †	3 †	3 †	
Virginia *	4 †	3 †	3 †	3 †	3 †	
West Virginia	4	3	3	2	2 *	

1 The National Commission on Educational Excellence recommended in 1983 that students who wish to continue their education after high school complete a program of study consisting of the following: four years of English, three years of mathematics (Algebra I and higher level courses), three years of science, three years of social studies, two years of foreign language, and one-half year of computer studies.

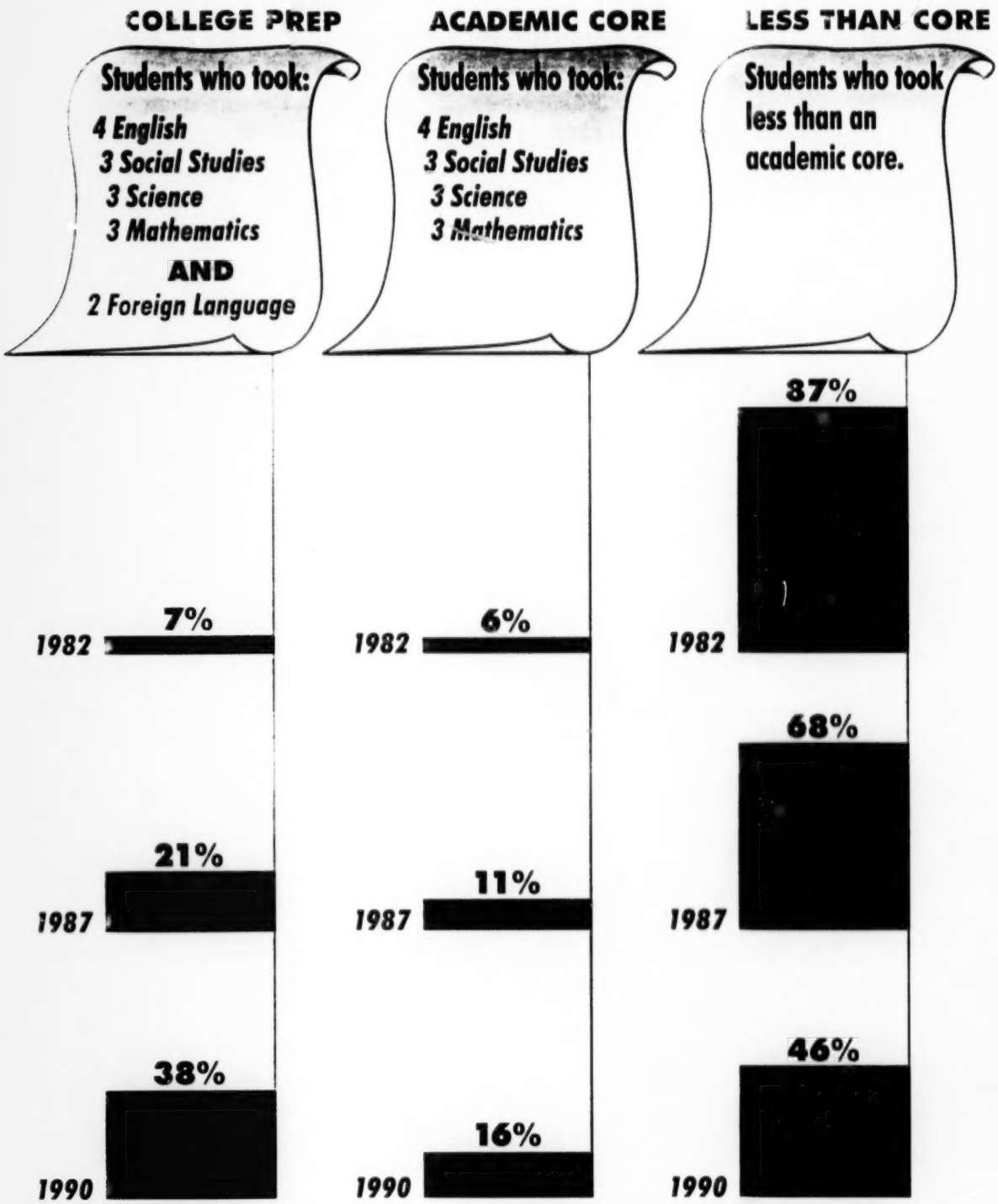
† Indicates each institution decides its admissions requirements, and there is no explicit state-level policy.

* Number of credits indicated are strongly and explicitly recommended but not required by state-level policy and/or a state higher education agency.

Two-thirds of the SREB states (Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, and West Virginia) have state policies about how college students who enter public institutions are placed into regular or remedial courses. Few states have established standards that students taking remedial courses must meet to exit these courses. Only Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, and Texas require students to pass exit examinations that reflect the same standards used to place students into remedial courses. The most common requirement for exiting a remedial course is to receive a passing grade.

WHAT'S IN A DIPLOMA?

Credits Earned by High School Graduates in the South



*South includes SREB states, Delaware, and the District of Columbia.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, "The 1990 High School Transcript Study Tabulations: Comparative Data on Credits Earned and Demographics for 1990, 1987, and 1982 High School Graduates," April 1993.

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How do schools and colleges work together to improve readiness for college?

State boards of education in all SREB states have statewide standards for college preparatory courses. But higher education agencies in only seven SREB states (Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas) report that colleges and universities regularly review the content of college preparatory courses with secondary schools and state school agencies.

As public schools continue to revise curricula and course and performance standards, they must ask both what students must know and be able to do to graduate from high school ***and*** what they must know and be able to do to succeed in college. The larger the gap between the two standards, the larger the percentage of high school graduates who will need to take remedial courses in college.

Nearly all SREB states now report to high schools on whether their graduates were placed in remedial courses and how their graduates performed in college-level courses during their freshmen year. Information from these reports can be used by high school and college faculties to improve teaching and learning in schools and colleges.

Examples of cooperative efforts between higher education and the public schools to better prepare students for college include:

- Developing system-wide changes in mathematics and science education through the National Science Foundation Statewide Systemic Initiatives Program in Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia.
- Establishing joint task forces to promote educational reform and the restructuring of the elementary and secondary schools in Alabama, Florida (the Postsecondary Accountability Articulation Committee and the Intersector Task Force on High School Preparation for Postsecondary Education and Employment), Georgia (Georgia Partnership for Education), and South Carolina (South Carolina Council on Educational Collaboration). Kentucky's Education Reform Act directed the Council on Higher Education to develop a plan for higher education's participation in school reform.
- Developing cooperative programs to identify and recruit students in middle schools into courses that lead to college preparatory study in high school.
- Encouraging school and college faculty to share resources and ideas that can help improve instruction in schools and colleges through the SREB Academic Alliance Awards. Among other activities, the alliances examine how school-to-college reports on student performance can improve the connections between school and college curricula.

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[1] National Center for Education Statistics, *The 1990 High School Transcript Study Tabulations: Comparative Data on Credits Earned for 1990, 1987, and 1982 High School Graduates*, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Washington, D.C., April 1993.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

States are making important improvements in the relevance and academic quality of vocational education programs. SREB's High Schools That Work program—which now reaches more than 300 high schools—provides evidence of these positive changes. But the changes are happening too slowly, and they are not reaching enough schools and students.

Reforms like the High Schools That Work program expect students to complete mathematics, science, and communications courses that have a hands-on teaching approach and a content similar to college prep courses. Where this approach has been tried in earnest, more students are staying in school and succeeding in challenging subjects. The approach works best when there is also a commitment to end the "general track," which fails to prepare students adequately for college or work.

About one-half of the SREB states have strengthened requirements for vocational education, and a growing number of high schools offer courses where students learn through more hands-on, applied methods. These are important trends. States should increase efforts to put more academic "starch" in vocational programs, and they should take actions to improve the academic and technical preparation of vocational teachers.

In gauging the results of their vocational reform efforts, one of the measures states will want to use is to compare the achievement of students in college prep and vocational studies. Most states can't do that today.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

BY THE YEAR 2000—

Significant gains will be achieved in the mathematics, sciences, and communications competencies of vocational education students.

- Half of the SREB states have changed requirements for students completing vocational programs. These changes include increasing mathematics and science requirements, defining more clearly the credits required in an occupational program, and establishing standards for courses and student performance in vocational programs.
- More than 300 high schools now participate in the SREB *High Schools That Work* program. Less than 40 were involved in 1990. SREB's *High Schools That Work* is designed to raise the academic achievement of vocational students preparing to enter the labor force or continue their education immediately after high school. These schools expect vocational students to complete mathematics and science courses that have content similar to that in college preparatory courses. Students in *High Schools That Work* who complete SREB's recommended vocational program score higher in reading, mathematics, and science than students in less-challenging vocational programs.

- Few states know the number of high school graduates who complete four credits in a vocational program; none know how many students who complete a vocational program earn three mathematics and three science credits that include college preparatory mathematics and science concepts.
- Few substantive changes that would improve the academic and technical preparation for vocational teachers have been made in state licensure requirements.
- There is little information available that provides comparisons of achievement for high school graduates who complete vocational programs with that of students completing a college preparatory program.

What actions will better prepare students in vocational programs for further education and employment?

States and schools are adopting the goals and practices of the SREB-State Vocational Education Consortium to revise and upgrade vocational programs. The *High Schools That Work* program provides a model that states can use to introduce higher level content into vocational programs.

Each state needs to be sure that students in vocational programs are required to complete four credits in an approved vocational area. Eight SREB states (Arkansas, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia) have taken steps to require all students to complete either a college preparatory or vocational program. Some states also have upgraded the academic core required of vocational students. Others have defined the number of vocational credits required for an approved program of study in each occupational area. A few states have done both.

The content and concepts of mathematics and science required in vocational programs should be comparable to those in college preparatory programs. These concepts may be presented in different ways (*i.e.*, through practical applications), but expectations of what students need to know and be able to do should be similar. Since 1990, the number of schools teaching college preparatory mathematics and science through an applied process has doubled, and the number of students enrolled in such courses has grown from less than 10,000 to more than 20,000.

Most states are strengthening vocational studies by developing school-to-work programs. These programs encourage high school students to take academic and technical courses, and they promote collaboration between schools and employers. The best school-to-work programs have a career focus and provide on-the-job training in high-level skills. They also establish links between high schools and postsecondary education that enable students to earn credits at community or technical colleges. Funding from The Pew Charitable Trusts provides planning grants to develop work-based learning programs in 19 schools in the *High Schools That Work* program. Each school will develop a plan that results in an industry-recognized credential that gives high school graduates access to high-skill, high-wage careers.

Reform of vocational education must address teacher preparation. Each state needs to review its requirements for the academic and technical preparation of vocational teachers. Examples of the kinds of changes that can be made in requirements can be seen in Maryland, North Carolina, and Virginia. Maryland requires more mathematics, science, and language arts for vocational teachers. Virginia increased the number of courses required in subject areas and requires prospective vocational teachers to score at or above the 40th percentile on national occupational competency tests. North Carolina requires prospective vocational teachers to complete two concentrations: one in the vocational area and one in an academic area such as math or science.

Are vocational students showing gains in mathematics, science, and communications competencies?

Most SREB states do not know. Only four states (Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, and West Virginia) know the number of high school graduates who complete four credits in a vocational area. None know how many students complete a vocational program with three math and three science credits.

All states have plans for measuring competencies of vocational students in key areas, but only Alabama, Florida, Maryland, and South Carolina are currently producing reports that compare the achievement of students completing vocational programs with those completing other programs.

Information available from tests administered at schools in the SREB *High Schools That Work* program shows that students who complete the vocational program recommended by the SREB-State Vocational Education Consortium score higher on achievement tests in reading, mathematics, and science than do students who complete less-demanding vocational programs.

Most SREB states have goals for placing students who complete vocational programs into related jobs, the military, or postsecondary education. Most have a statewide method of collecting information on what students do after graduation.

If states are to determine the progress of vocational students, they must develop better information about students in different programs of study. States should know what students achieve in basic subjects, what happens to students after they complete high school, and which academic and vocational courses students take. Few states can report which students follow an academic or vocational program. Until there is better information on what courses students take and on the achievement levels of students who follow different programs, it will not be possible to measure gains or to tell which programs work best.

COLLEGE ATTENDANCE

More students go to college and finish college than ever before. About 43 percent of young adults in the SREB states have completed at least a year of college, and about half that number have completed four or more years.

The percentage of young adults in the South who have been to college for at least one year grew rapidly in the last decade and could catch up with the national percentage by the year 2000. But it will be harder to match the nation's percentage of young adults who have four years of college or more—that gap hasn't changed since 1980. Here's one reason why: Although more African Americans are finishing at least one year of college than in 1980, fewer are completing four years. A smaller percentage of Hispanics are completing one year or four years of college.

At least two important actions could improve the South's college completion rate. First, colleges and universities that admit students who need remedial help must accept the responsibility to provide quality remedial programs and the extra support these students need to succeed. Second, many students fall into the "transfer crack" between two- and four-year colleges and never make the transition. State leaders need to insist that transfer policies be well-defined, that institutions provide information and counseling about transferring to all two-year graduates, and that institutions and their governing and coordinating boards develop better information about how many students transfer.

COLLEGE ATTENDANCE

BY THE YEAR 2000—

The percentage of adults who have attended college or earned two-year, four-year, and graduate degrees will be at the national averages or higher.

- Higher percentages of 18- to 24-year-olds enroll in college today than in the 1980s, and the SREB average is closer to the national average. Also, a higher percentage of young adults (25 to 34 years old) have completed one or more years of college than in the 1980s. The regional percentage increased from 41 percent in 1981 to 43 percent in 1991; the national average remained at 45 percent. Sixty-two percent of the nation's 1992 high school graduates enrolled in a two-year or four-year college immediately after graduation. No SREB state is at or above the national percentage.
- The proportions of black and Hispanic young adults in the region completing at least a year of college are slightly higher than the national averages for blacks and Hispanics in these groups. The percentages of blacks and Hispanics completing four or more years of college are about the same for the nation and the region.

- There continue to be marked differences in college attendance among citizens of different races. In the region, 45 of 100 white, 35 of 100 black, and 27 of 100 Hispanic young adults complete one or more years of college.
- Just over 25 percent of the nation's adults have a two-year college degree or higher. About 20 percent have a bachelor's degree; less than 10 percent have a graduate degree. Maryland and Virginia are the only SREB states that reach or exceed these national averages—with one exception. The percentage of Texas citizens who have earned bachelor's or higher degrees matches the national average.

How do states and institutions encourage students who seek to transfer from two-year to four-year colleges?

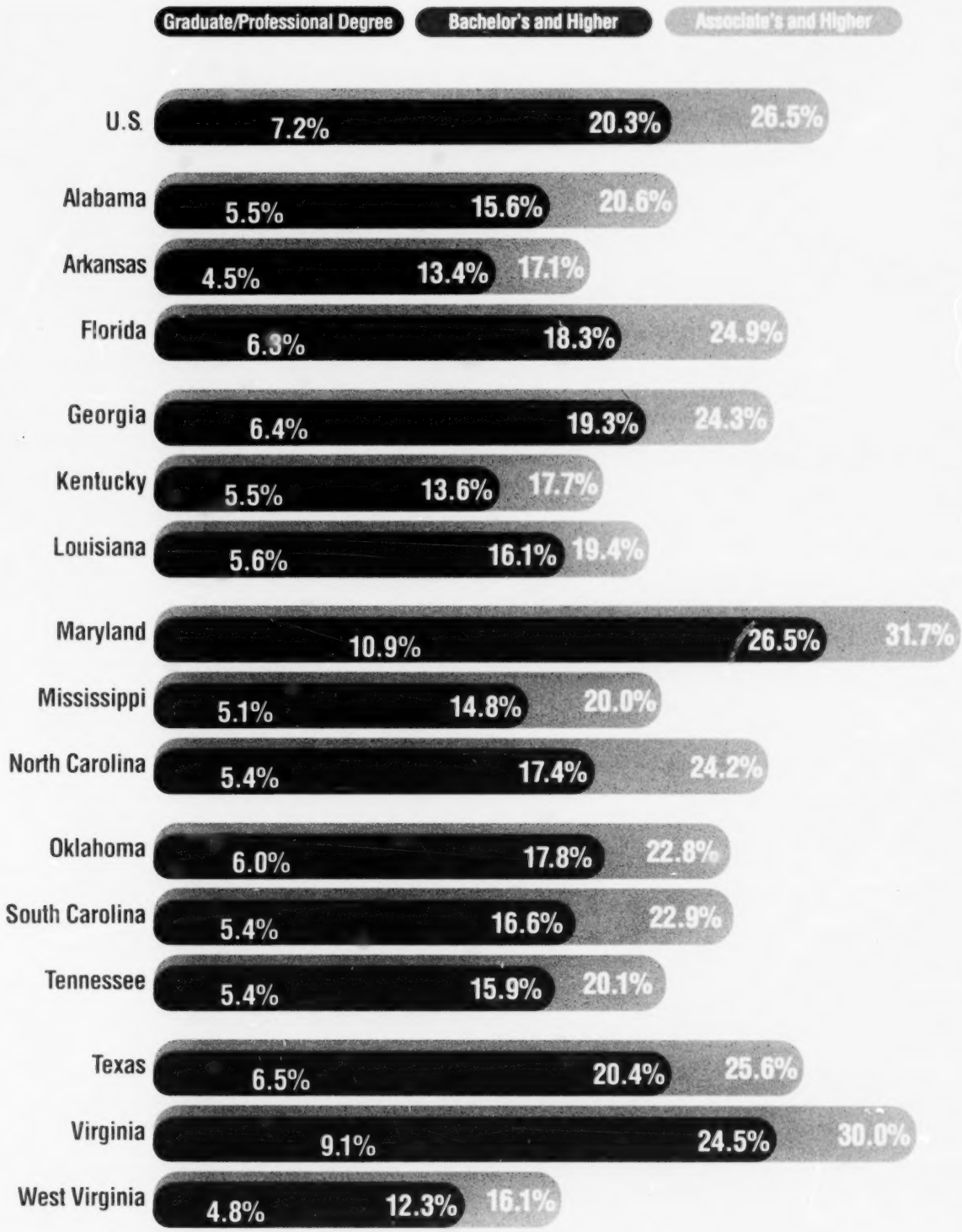
Almost 1.5 million persons attend public two-year colleges in SREB states. More than one-half of the first-time freshmen in Alabama, Florida, Maryland, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Texas are enrolled in two-year colleges. About one of five persons who enters a two-year college eventually enrolls in a four-year college or university. Less than half of the SREB states can report the percentage of students who enroll in public two-year colleges and transfer to four-year colleges and universities. The transfer rates reported range from 5 to 34 percent—but each state calculates the rates differently.

With 1.5 million students in two-year colleges—and some states relying on two-year colleges to be the primary gateway into four-year institutions—it is increasingly important that the links between them work better.

In all SREB states, individual four-year colleges and universities develop program-to-

HOW MANY ADULTS HAVE COLLEGE DEGREES?

(Persons Over 25 Years Old)



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Decennial Census, April 1990 (June 1993).

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program and course-by-course agreements with individual two-year institutions. Two-year and four-year institutions assign staff to assist students in transferring, and statewide committees of representatives of two-year and four-year institutions establish recommendations on the transferability of credits.

What other, less common practices are states attempting?

- Some states have agreed upon a "core curriculum" that is available to students attending all two-year and four-year public colleges and universities (Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, Tennessee, and West Virginia).
- Four states use a common course numbering system for beginning college-level courses (Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, and Texas).
- Institutions in four states agree on a common academic calendar (Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, and Texas).
- Several states have a uniform format for college transcripts (Florida, North Carolina, and Texas).
- About half the SREB states publish statewide transfer counseling guides and manuals (Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Virginia).

What do we know about college graduation rates?

We do not know if students who enter college today are more likely to graduate than were students who entered college ten or twenty years ago. We do know that only about one-half of entering freshmen graduate with a bachelor's degree within six years. Minority students graduate at rates much lower than those for white students. The percentage of first-time freshmen who graduate within six years ranges from 31 to 60 percent in the SREB states that report this information. Graduation rates for blacks and Hispanics are 10 to 20 percentage points below those for whites.

Most SREB states have developed or are developing systems to monitor graduation rates at public colleges and universities, but data on college graduation rates that are comparable from state to state are not available. Because federal and state laws now require institutions to report graduation rates, better and more comparable information about graduation rates should be available in coming years.

COLLEGE EFFECTIVENESS

Calls for more accountability in higher education have grown louder in the last five years. Most SREB states now assess colleges and universities and issue periodic reports on higher education performance.

Tight state budgets explain some of the extra scrutiny, but there is also a sense that higher education must make important changes to help keep our states and nation economically competitive.

In Changing States: Higher Education and the Public Good, the SREB Commission for Educational Quality asserted that America's first-rate higher education system still has room to improve: "We have the world's best system of higher education, but this does not mean that all who enter—or graduate—have been well-served."

More students are coming to campus after being out of high school for years; more students come from diverse backgrounds. More are employed; more have families; more attend college part time. Colleges and universities have to respond more directly to the concerns of "customers"—students, industry, and government.

While most SREB states have ways to assess the performance of colleges and universities, the assessments themselves are still in the developing stages, and they are rarely linked to budgets or incentives. There is no consensus among states or institutions about the most important assessment of all—what college graduates should know and be able to do.

COLLEGE EFFECTIVENESS

BY THE YEAR 2000—

The quality and effectiveness of all colleges and universities will be regularly assessed, with particular emphasis on the performance of undergraduate students.

- Most SREB states have procedures for assessing colleges and universities. Many states have recently adopted legislation designed to increase higher education accountability.
- Most SREB states issue periodic public reports on measures of performance and on progress toward achieving higher education objectives.
- Accrediting agencies and organizations expect institutions to set improvement goals, describe specific actions to achieve the goals, and assess their progress.

- Few states have linked institutional assessments to budgets. Performance funding has been discussed in several states, but only Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Virginia have appropriated funds to encourage and reward improvements. Kentucky will do so in its next budget. Arkansas and Texas have proposed doing so.
- Information on college effectiveness is collected and reported by state higher education agencies, but states are still seeking straightforward, easy-to-comprehend ways of reporting to the public.
- There is no consensus among institutions or states on what college graduates should know and be able to do.
- Only seven states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas) have established specific indicators and achievement targets for graduate programs at public universities. In most instances, these goals describe the minimum numbers of students to be enrolled and the numbers of degrees to be awarded.
- Only Mississippi, Tennessee, and Texas report specific targets for state funding of research and development.

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How are states assessing the effectiveness of colleges and universities?

SREB states are using all of these strategies to increase the accountability of colleges and universities:

- Certification and licensure of programs by a state agency;
- Regional and program accreditation;
- Allocations of dollars contingent upon certain activities or outcomes (performance funding);
- State-level planning and goal setting.

Educational program quality has traditionally been an institutional responsibility. But most SREB states now ask institutions to

HIGHER EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY AND ASSESSMENT REPORTING

	Annual Comprehensive Accountability Report	Assessment of Student Learning Required	Report on Goal Progress as Part of State Plan	Budget Connection
Alabama	None	Recommended by state agency; being developed	None	No
Arkansas	Legislative requirement	Yes	Being incorporated	Proposed
Florida	Legislative requirement	Yes	Yes	Indirect
Georgia	Incorporated in planning process	Yes	No	No
Kentucky	Legislative requirement	Yes	Yes	Yes
Louisiana	Legislative requirement	Entry level placement tests	Yes	No
Maryland	Incorporated in master plan	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mississippi	None	Under consideration	Under consideration	No
North Carolina	Legislative requirement	Yes	Yes	No
Oklahoma	Incorporated in master plan	Yes	Yes	Yes
South Carolina	Legislative requirement	Yes	Yes	Indirect
Tennessee	Legislative requirement	Yes	Yes	Yes
Texas	Legislative requirement; incorporated in plan and budget	Yes	Yes	Proposed
Virginia	Incorporated in master plan	Yes	Yes	Indirect
West Virginia	Legislative requirement	Yes	Yes	Indirect

SOURCE: 1994 SREB Benchmarks survey of state higher education agencies

report on specific measures of institutional, student, and faculty performance. Typically, these annual reports may include:

- Enrollments;
- Degrees awarded;
- Faculty workloads;
- Graduation rates;
- The numbers of students who take remedial courses;
- The research and public service activities of faculty;
- Student performance on entrance examinations to graduate and professional schools;
- Student performance on professional licensure examinations;
- Follow-up surveys of alumni and employers of graduates.

Annual accountability reports are relatively new in higher education. In half of the states that require these "higher education report cards," the first reports were made in 1992 or later.

States need information to help monitor effectiveness and design better policies. But different kinds and amounts of information may be needed to guide changes in academic programs at colleges and universities. For example, knowing the number and percentage of students who are required to take remedial mathematics can be important in deciding where the state needs to place resources to better prepare students for college. But this information might not be useful in improving remedial mathematics instruction at a particular college or university. On the other hand, the knowledge that students cannot perform algebraic functions is important to course designers, but it may not be necessary to make policy decisions about where remedial instruction should occur and how it should be funded.

Some are skeptical about whether the kinds of information gathered in accountability reports can improve campus and state decision making about higher education. As reports are prepared in 1994 and following years, it will be important to ask:

- Do the reports provide an accurate picture of the condition of a state's system of higher education?
- Is the information used to monitor important state policies or progress toward important goals?
- How well does the process serve state planning and policymaking?
- Does the reporting affect or inform the budget process and the allocation of resources?
- What are the best ways to report the information to different audiences?

TEACHER EDUCATION

Colleges and universities that prepare teachers have a large job to do, and many of them are not doing it well enough.

SREB states are investing billions of dollars in school improvement efforts. They are asking schools to manage themselves better, to offer courses with more challenging content, to teach that content in new ways, and to serve an increasingly diverse group of students.

Schools cannot meet these demands without teachers who are prepared to teach in today's classrooms. It makes sense that colleges and universities help schools meet these new demands by improving the way they prepare teachers. Undergraduate programs should provide students a rigorous grounding in liberal arts, in-depth study in a discipline, and a core of education courses based on the best research. Students can best learn to teach in real-school situations under the tutelage of college faculty and master teachers.

But too many teacher preparation programs are mired in the past, training prospective teachers for the schools of yesterday, not tomorrow. Such programs will not change without leadership from the top. College and university presidents need to insist on stronger teacher preparation programs that involve the whole university—with faculty from education, arts and sciences, and other disciplines all playing a part.

On another issue, many SREB states have invested heavily to recruit and retain more minority teachers, and a few states have tried to increase the number of male teachers. At best these efforts have stemmed the tide somewhat; they have not reversed the trend toward a whiter, more female teacher workforce. But the efforts are important. They need to be redoubled, and states need to make a greater effort to get more minorities into preparation programs and develop recruitment strategies that move more minority and male graduates into the region's classrooms.

TEACHER EDUCATION

BY THE YEAR 2000—

All institutions that prepare teachers will have effective teacher education programs that place primary emphasis on the knowledge and performance of graduates.

- Several SREB states took the lead in the movement to strengthen undergraduate teacher preparation programs by requiring that a greater proportion of courses be in academic disciplines. Graduates of these revised programs are just beginning to teach.
- All states allow college graduates without teaching degrees to enter teaching through alternative certification programs.
- Most SREB states have raised standards for admission into teacher preparation programs and for licensing teachers—including higher grade-point averages, testing for basic skills and subject area knowledge, and on-the-job evaluations for beginning teachers.

- College and university presidents are not sufficiently involved in the development and strengthening of teacher preparation programs. The changes needed to improve these programs require continuing attention and leadership from presidents and other academic leaders.
- All states have expanded their efforts to recruit more minority students into teaching, but in most states minorities represent the same or a smaller proportion of teachers than in the late 1980s.
- In the 1980s most states increased their expectations of what graduates of teacher preparation programs should know and be able to do and raised standards for licensure. States now need to align teacher preparation and professional development with the efforts to upgrade curriculum and student assessment.

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What are states doing to improve the preparation and performance of beginning teachers?

Since 1990, task forces in Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, and Oklahoma have recommended changes to improve programs that prepare persons to teach. Recommendations from these task forces vary according to the programs each state already has in place. They include:

- Redefining what teachers should know and be able to do;
- Increasing the emphasis on the study in academic disciplines;
- Joint efforts between the public schools and faculties in the arts and sciences and education;
- Designing and implementing results-based licensure systems for teachers and administrators;
- Developing stronger school-college partnerships, including partnerships that support more field experiences for student teachers and more coaching for beginning teachers by college and school faculty.

Nearly all states have implemented or are developing mentoring or other assistance programs for beginning teachers. First-year teachers are assigned an experienced teacher who provides support and supervision and, in some cases, evaluates the performance of the new teacher.

Several states have created professional development centers that provide advanced training and other activities to new and experienced teachers. These centers may promote innovative teaching practices, provide specific training in areas like school-based decision making or the use of technology, support field-based preservice programs, or give experienced teachers the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of a particular subject or discipline. The North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching, the South Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching and School Leadership, and the Texas Centers for Professional Development and Technology are examples.

What efforts have been made to increase the percentage of minority teachers?

In 10 SREB states, one of every three children attending elementary and secondary schools is a member of a minority group. More than 40 percent of the school children in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Texas are black, Hispanic, Native American, or Asian American. In only two states (Mississippi and Louisiana) do minorities make up 25 percent or more of the teaching force; they represent 20 to 24 percent of the teachers in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

These percentages of minority teachers have not improved in most states since 1989, despite significant efforts. SREB states have established or expanded scholarship and loan programs for students who promise to become teachers, developed stronger alliances

between school districts and colleges and universities to recruit prospective minority teachers, and established teacher recruitment centers. Even so, the percentage of minority teachers has not increased.

The SREB-State Teacher Supply and Demand Project is finding that smaller proportions of new teachers are minorities and that many minority teachers are reaching retirement age. States in the project now have information about the number and kinds of prospective teachers in the college pipeline. Preliminary results show that blacks who graduate from teacher education programs in a state are less likely to become teachers in that state than are whites. That is also the case for male teacher education graduates.

PERCENT MINORITY ENROLLMENT AND MINORITY TEACHERS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 1991

	Percent of Enrollment	Percent of Teachers
United States	**31 %**	**14 %**
SREB States	**33**	**19**
Alabama	41	24
Arkansas	27	16
Florida	41	22
Georgia	37	21
Kentucky	10	4
Louisiana	47	30
Maryland	38	24
Mississippi	48	29
North Carolina	32	20
Oklahoma	28	13
South Carolina	43	21
Tennessee	22	15
Texas	48	19
Virginia	32	18
West Virginia	5	5

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Schools and Staffing Survey: 1990-91.*

How are state alternative certification programs working?

Last year, more than 5000 persons became teachers through alternatives to regular teacher education programs in 10 SREB states. About half of them were in Texas. While all SREB states report having such programs, only 10 (Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, and West Virginia) report how many persons have been licensed through alternative programs. Four (Alabama, Maryland, South Carolina, and Texas) have studies underway to assess the effectiveness of the programs.

Requirements to complete alternative certification programs vary from state to state, but most require prospective teachers to have a college degree in an academic discipline, to pass the standard tests required for licensure, and to demonstrate their skills during an on-the-job assessment.

Once limited to shortage areas, alternative certification programs are now used in most teaching areas. These programs can bring more minorities into teaching. Texas, for example, reports that minorities represent a larger proportion of those licensed through its alternative program than through regular programs. Alternative programs can also attract new teachers with strong subject area backgrounds.

Are states linking statewide school reforms to teacher preparation programs?

State actions to redefine what teachers need to know and be able to do are several years behind efforts to develop new performance standards for students. The first attempts to align teacher preparation and licensure to changes in schools are underway. Teachers and principals are being given more authority and flexibility to make decisions at the school level. Teacher preparation, licensure, on-the-job evaluations, and in-service education programs must be aligned with these changes.

Standards for advanced teacher credentials are being piloted by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Oklahoma and Mississippi have passed legislation to recognize or reward teachers who achieve national certification.

Most of the persons who can help students achieve at higher levels, make schools more accountable, reduce the dropout rate, and reach other goals by the year 2000 are already managing and teaching in schools. About two-thirds of the region's teachers have 10 or more years experience; about one-fourth have been in the classroom over 20 years. Strengthening the skills of existing teachers and staff will be as important to the success of education improvement as preparing new teachers. For example, Kentucky reports that a 16-fold increase in funding may not provide enough staff development to adequately prepare teachers to carry out the objectives of the Kentucky Education Reform Act.

State leaders must ask:

- Are colleges and universities and the public schools working together to examine the knowledge and skills needed by new teachers and those already employed in the schools?
- What actions are being taken to encourage current teachers to upgrade their knowledge and skills?
- Are teachers being prepared to use technology effectively in the classroom?
- What is being done to bring teachers and arts and sciences and education faculty into better working relationships?

Higher standards for teacher preparation programs and teacher licensure should be linked to higher content standards and higher performance standards for students and schools. Programs that prepare teachers need to insure that teachers know the subject matter and have the skills to help students meet the new standards. Those who are developing curriculum and performance standards for students must be aware that teacher preparation and professional development programs will need time to reorganize and provide teachers with the training to implement the new standards.

SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS

Most SREB states now have ways to evaluate school performance, and every state reports to the public each year about how schools or school districts measure up. The school performance measures and public reports are new and need to be supported and improved.

Most states provide some financial or technical assistance to schools that want to improve, but in many states the help is not enough. School change is hard work, and principals and teachers need time for planning and money for long-term staff development.

The move in some states toward more decision making in schools is important, but here, too, the benefits will not be realized unless school boards, administrators, teachers, and parents have been trained adequately—both to develop goals and to focus on results.

BY THE YEAR 2000—

All states and localities will have schools with improved performance and productivity demonstrated by results.

- Almost all SREB states now have measures of school performance in their education accountability systems. This means that schools can be judged not only by the traditional yardstick of what is put into the school, but also by the results the school is able to produce.
- Every SREB state now issues "report cards" on its public schools; only eight did in 1990. These reports include state and district results—and nearly all of them now include school results. This was not the case four years ago.
- Most SREB states now provide financial and technical assistance to schools to develop and strengthen links between the schools and their communities.

- Schools improve by focusing on performance and results, but this is happening too slowly, in part because not enough school board members, school administrators, teachers and parents know how to develop goals and emphasize results.

How do school accountability systems work?

Most state accountability systems for schools now include three elements:

- Performance standards for schools;
- "Report cards" on how schools measure up to those standards;
- Incentives and sanctions for schools intended to spur actions to meet the standards.

The kinds of results for which schools are accountable vary considerably from state to state, but most include student achievement information, attendance, graduation and dropout rates, and the percentages of graduates who go on to higher education or to employment.

The information included in state education reports also differs from state to state, but the reports have a common goal to inform policymakers, educators, parents, and the public about school performance and student achievement. Reports generally provide information about schools that can be compared to state and district data or to other, comparable schools. In Kentucky, Maryland, and Texas, the reports compare specific information about a school's performance to established standards that all schools are expected to meet.

When states make progress toward educational goals, it is because individual schools are improving. Because the school is the focal point for improvement, reports about how schools are doing are essential.

School report cards can be useful in measuring progress toward a state's educational goals when they include enough important information. Most states are working to make the reports straightforward, easily understandable, and useful to parents and community leaders. But until states agree upon and use common definitions and methods for calculating the measures (completion and dropout rates, for example), these reports will not be very useful in determining where states stand relative to each other or to national and regional goals.

Most SREB states have or plan to implement systems that reward or sanction schools based on results for students. Examples of incentives include accreditation, financial rewards, increased flexibility for local schools and districts, challenge grants to assist low-performing schools, and the deregulation of high-performing schools. South Carolina implemented its School Incentive Program in 1984. Schools are rewarded for meeting specific criteria, including student achievement, student and teacher attendance, and reductions in school dropout rates. Texas recognizes and rewards schools and districts that demonstrate success in achieving state educational goals. Incentive programs are also underway in Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Tennessee. Sanctions include loss of state accreditation, reorganizing schools, removing the superintendent and school board members from office, and intervention or takeover by the state.

How can states help schools establish goals and use results-oriented accountability systems?

The SREB Leadership Academy provides intensive preparation for teams of teachers, board members, principals, and superintendents from schools committed to setting specific, measurable goals for education and working to achieve them. The NationsBank Leadership Awards Program provides sizable grants to schools and school systems that work to implement performance-based plans to get results.

The SREB-NationsBank program is developing a model for states to use in their leadership academies. The curriculum for leadership development is being field-tested and evaluated in Georgia and in the NationsBank Leadership Award school districts. The potential exists to significantly improve schools by improving the skills of those who lead them--and to do so on a large scale that can have an impact in more and more of the 27,000 schools in the SREB states.

In the last two years, Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, North Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia have either revised or developed new expectations for principals. Although it does not specifically revise standards for principals, Florida's *Blueprint 2000* describes what schools should do and has implications for the role of the principal. Arkansas' Task Force on Teacher Licensure has recommended an outcome-based certification system for school administrators. Nine school districts in Louisiana are piloting a new concept of principal evaluation being considered by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The North Carolina General Assembly in 1993 set in motion major changes in the way the state recruits, selects, and trains school leaders. Legislation calls for an independent panel to establish criteria and standards for educational administration training. The law

charges the Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina to reduce the number of institutions in the system that offer educational administration training. The law establishes a board to set standards for certification of administrators and to develop an examination based on those standards for entry-level administrators. It creates a school leadership academy and provides for 50 graduate scholarships for prospective principals and assistant principals.

Tennessee has new standards for principals, and all first-time principals are required to pass a certification examination. West Virginia adopted a revised evaluation process that outlines responsibilities and expected performance characteristics for school administrators.

Only about one-half of the SREB states require and provide funding to train local school board members. Fewer states prepare board members to oversee results-oriented accountability systems. As noted, states are doing more to prepare principals and superintendents to plan and operate such systems.

Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia have leadership institutes or academies for administrators. Florida, Maryland, and North Carolina operate regional centers that provide training and technical assistance in school-based management, the use of data to determine needs, and the selection of promising practices. The Texas School Improvement Initiative trains board members and school administrators to use site-based decision making. Other states offer on-going assistance and training through staff development workshops conducted by state departments of education.

How are the linkages between schools and communities being strengthened?

Most SREB states provide technical assistance to help school systems build community involvement in the schools. In some instances this assistance is in the form of funding community education coordinators who provide links between the schools and the community, conduct workshops and training in how to build community support, organize and develop school and business partnerships, identify and respond to education needs in the community, and increase parental involvement.

School-business partnerships continue to grow in every state. In those states that maintain records on the numbers of such partnerships, at least 80 percent of the school systems have one or more. Many of these partnerships are "adopt-a-school" and mentoring programs for students. In a number of states, these partnerships are becoming more comprehensive and potentially more important as alliances between schools and businesses address key educational issues, apply business expertise to school problems, and build long-term support.

SALARIES

SREB states grabbed national headlines in the 1980s with educational reforms that included aggressive efforts to raise salaries for teachers and faculty. In a remarkable five-year stretch, teachers' salaries in the South reached 90 percent of the national average, and faculty salaries reached 95 percent. But the latter 1980s were a high-water mark for salaries in the SREB states.

After a decade of efforts to catch up, salaries are higher—but SREB states have about the same relative national standing as 10 years ago.

Recession played a part in these disappointing results; so did aggressive efforts outside the South, where low enrollment growth allowed many states to raise the salaries of veteran teachers. Meanwhile, with substantial school enrollment increases and initiatives to lower class sizes, SREB states accounted for one-half of all the additional teachers hired in America.

The relative progress of the 1980s ebbed away as the 1990s began. The SREB average teacher's salary dipped about five percentage points compared to the nation. A bright spot is that teacher salaries in Arkansas, Kentucky, Oklahoma, and West Virginia have fared considerably better.

The relative salary rankings of teachers in the SREB states improve somewhat when cost-of-living differences are taken into account, but almost no SREB states are above the national average when these adjustments are made.

The story is similar for college faculty, although the salary trends have been less consistent among states. Average faculty salaries in the SREB states rose steadily during the 1980s, then lost ground against the national average.

Tying teacher salaries to performance remains an elusive goal. Some states have experimented with teacher career ladders and performance incentives, often as part of a tradeoff with teachers seeking higher pay. For the most part the teacher incentive pay programs are no longer operating or have remained experiments in a few states. Newer incentive programs emphasize school awards based on student progress.

The salaries of college faculty are tied more closely to performance because peer evaluations and judgments more heavily influence promotions and salary increases. The issue in higher education is not so much whether performance is rewarded but what performance is rewarded. Is outstanding teaching being rewarded as well as outstanding research? Does the evaluation of faculty performance take into account the priorities of an academic department as well as those of the institution and society at large?

BY THE YEAR 2000—

Salaries for teachers and faculty will be competitive in the marketplace, will reach important benchmarks, and will be linked to performance measures and standards.

- Many SREB states have set salary goals for school and college teachers. The goals aim for national, regional, or peer group averages, or seek to increase salaries by a fixed amount over time. Four SREB states have increased teachers' salaries more than the national average increase in the 1990s.

- Progress toward these salary goals is mixed at best. Most SREB states have lost ground relative to the national averages. In the 1980s, the average salary for faculty at public universities in the SREB region was almost 95 percent of the national average—the regional average for public school teachers reached 90 percent. Salaries for teachers and faculty in SREB states have declined as a percentage of the national average.

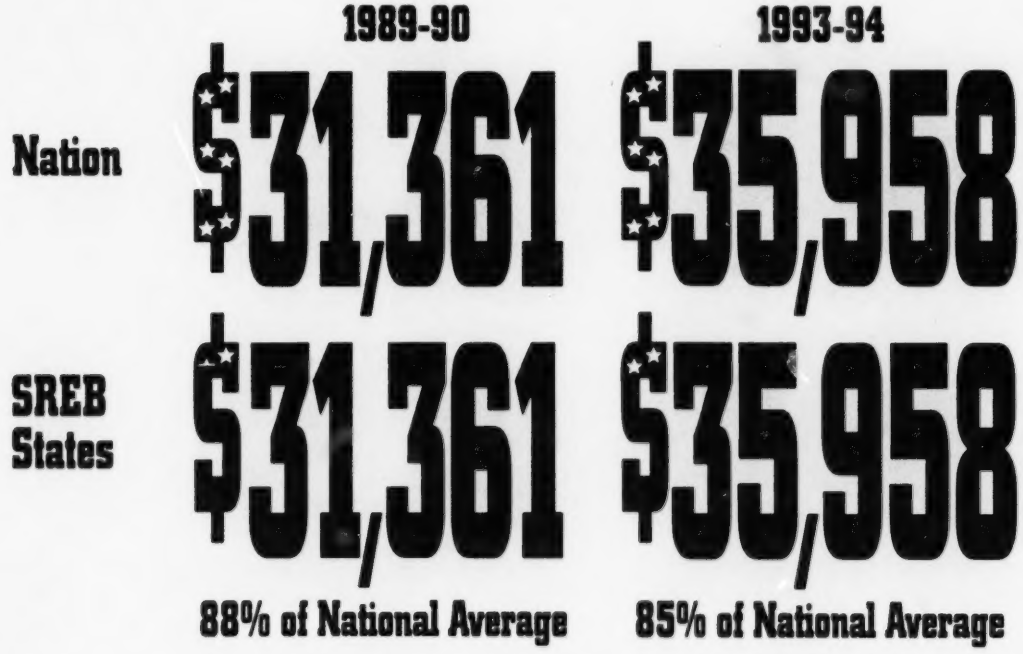
How do salaries for school and college teachers in the SREB states compare to national averages?

Most SREB states have not been able to match national salary averages for school or college faculty. One reason is that faculties have been growing in schools and colleges in the region since the mid-1980s, as a result of growing enrollments and initiatives to improve quality. In the elementary and secondary schools, some states added kindergarten and preschool programs and reduced student-teacher ratios. Since 1988, SREB states have added 114,000 more teachers to their payrolls. This is a greater increase than for all other states in the nation combined. Even with this dramatic growth, most states increased salaries significantly.

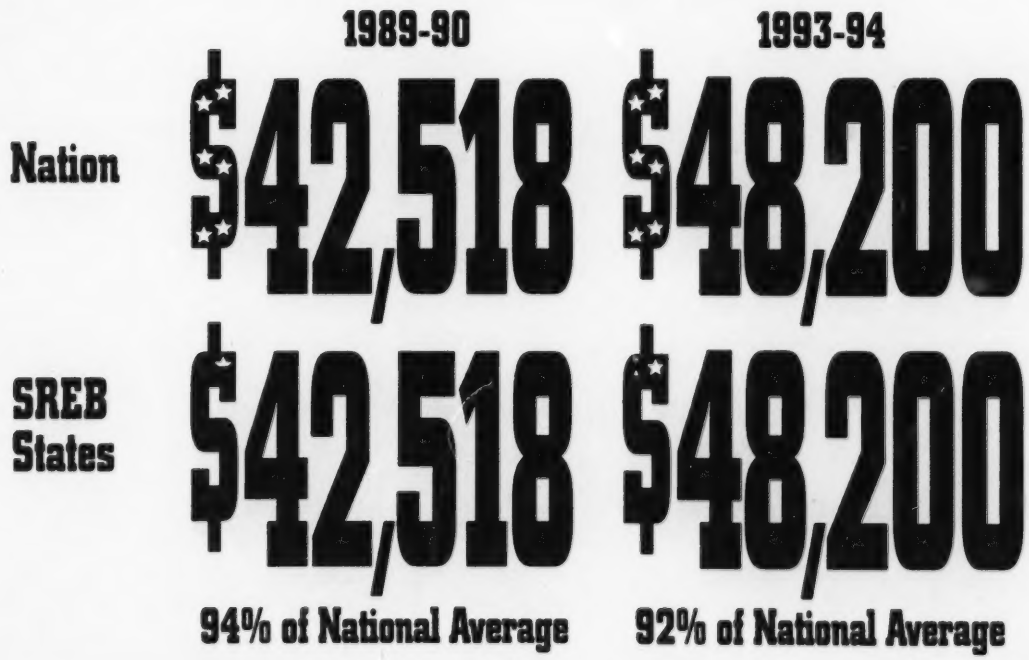
So far in this decade, increases in the average salaries of public school teachers have exceeded the national average increase in four SREB states (Arkansas, Kentucky, Oklahoma, and West Virginia). Those states established targets for salary increases and schedules for meeting the targets.

West Virginia's 1990 educational reform act included a three-year plan to raise average pay by $5,000. By 1994, the average teacher salary in West Virginia had increased from 73 percent to 85 percent of the national average. Arkansas earmarked revenues from a 1991 tax increase for education and teachers' salaries; in two years, salaries rose from 70 percent to 78 percent of the national average. Increases in average salaries for Kentucky teachers exceeded 15 percent during the first two years of the Kentucky Education Reform Act. Oklahoma is on schedule to raise salaries for beginning teachers by $9,000 by 1995.

AVERAGE TEACHER SALARIES



AVERAGE FACULTY SALARIES AT PUBLIC FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES



Sources: National Education Association, *Rankings of the States*, various years; SREB Date Exchange, various years.

The national average annual increase in salaries for faculty at public universities was about 6 percent in the 1980s, including the first half of the decade when double-digit inflation was common. Since 1990, the average annual salary increase is just over 3 percent.

The percentage increase in average salaries for faculty at public universities exceeded the national average increase in eight SREB states (Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and West Virginia).

Virginia is the only SREB state where 1993-94 faculty salaries are at or above the national average, but its salary rankings among peer groups are down significantly.

AVERAGE TEACHER SALARIES
SREB STATES
1989-90 AND 1993-94

	Average Teacher Salary 1993-94	Percent Change 1990 to 1994
United States	**$ 35,958**	**15 %**
SREB States	**30,612**	**11**
SREB States as a Percent of U.S.	**85.1 %**	
Alabama	28,705	13
Arkansas	27,873	25
Florida	32,020	11
Georgia	30,456	9
Kentucky	31,582	20
Louisiana *	26,350	8
Maryland	39,937	10
Mississippi	25,235	4
North Carolina	29,680	6
Oklahoma	26,749	16
South Carolina	30,190	11
Tennessee	30,037	11
Texas	30,519	11
Virginia * *	33,128	7
West Virginia	30,549	34

SOURCE: NEA, *Rankings of the States*, various years; Louisiana Department of Education.

* Estimated by the Louisiana Department of Education.

* * NEA Estimate.

How do marketplace conditions, competition, and cost of living affect salaries?

The test regarding salaries is whether a school, college, or university can attract and retain talented persons. States do not generally assess whether compensation is adequate by this measure.

Too little is known about teacher and faculty supply and demand. The SREB-State Teacher Supply and Demand Project (partially funded by the National Center for Education Statistics) is working with education agencies in Arkansas, Florida, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia to produce information about graduates of teacher education programs, including how many are employed as teachers and where they choose to teach. States need to know more about the marketplace within which they must compete for talented persons to teach in schools and colleges.

AVERAGE SALARIES FOR FULL-TIME FACULTY AT PUBLIC FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES IN SREB STATES, 1989-90 AND 1993-94

	1993-94	Percent Change 1990 to 1994
United States	**$ 48,200**	**13 %**
SREB States	**44,487**	**11**
SREB States as a Percent of U.S.	**92.3 %**	
Alabama	42,194	17
Arkansas	40,592	19
Florida	46,153	3
Georgia	45,150	12
Kentucky	44,852	21
Louisiana	38,820	18
Maryland	47,242	6
Mississippi	40,800	17
North Carolina	46,284	11
Oklahoma	41,336	14
South Carolina	42,504	10
Tennessee	44,972	16
Texas	45,680	9
Virginia	49,134	5
West Virginia	38,849	20

SOURCE: SREB State Data Exchange.

When cost-of-living differences are considered, average salaries for teachers in SREB states compare somewhat more favorably to other states. Most states move up—a few move up significantly—in the 1993 adjusted national salary rankings calculated by the American Federation of Teachers. Even so, average salaries in all states except Kentucky and Virginia remain below the national average when a cost-of-living adjustment is made. Maryland (the only SREB state in which the unadjusted average salary is above the national average) falls to just below the national average when a cost-of-living factor is applied.

Regional and national salary averages are important benchmarks and goals for states, but states may arrive at different definitions of what compensation is necessary to be competitive. Salaries for teachers may need to be competitive with selected occupations or with salaries offered in nearby states.

For college and university faculty, states may decide that salaries need to be competitive with those of faculty at similar or "peer" institutions in other states. Competition for college and university faculty is at least regional and more often national. Only one SREB state has average faculty salaries at or above the national average.

What are states doing to link salaries to standards and performance?

States and higher education institutions are giving more attention to how faculty workloads and productivity are measured and rewarded. Peer evaluations and judgments continue to play a major role in determining promotions and salary increases for faculty in most colleges and universities.

Incentive or performance pay for teachers and administrators is not common in schools. Programs to reward teachers include Tennessee's career ladder program; additional pay for working as a "mentor" with beginning teachers or fellow veteran teachers (Georgia, Louisiana, and West Virginia); North Carolina's local differentiated pay plans; and incentives based on school performance that provide additional funding to schools to supplement salaries or instructional budgets (Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas).

FUNDING

The demands on our schools and colleges have never been greater. They must provide better instruction to more students who have more complex needs and backgrounds—backgrounds that may include poverty, drugs, violence, and less appreciation for the value of education. Schools and colleges are challenged at every turn—by the inner-city child living in poverty who enters first grade already behind; by the 28-year-old enrolled in a community college seeking the skills needed for a job with a future; by the laid-off white-collar manager who returns to college looking for new skills and knowledge with which to compete.

In many of the SREB states, funding for education has not kept pace with these growing demands. In a third of the states, the percentage of budgets invested in elementary and secondary education is less than it was in 1987. Other states have just maintained their funding for schools. For higher education, the trend is worse—two-thirds of the states now spend a smaller share on colleges and universities. These trends mean that over a decade billions of dollars will not go for the education of children and adults because education has slipped as a priority in states' budgets.

Demands for state services and claims on state budgets are arguably greater than ever. Court-ordered mandates and entitlement programs make greater claims on state dollars. Because of this, the words of the SREB Commission for Educational Quality in 1988 bear repeating: "It is difficult to imagine that in the next several years an SREB state committed to educational improvement could spend a smaller share of its budget for education. Simply stated, given the economic realities, it is unlikely that states can spend proportionately less to do more in education."

Higher education's funding problems are compounded because colleges do not have the same kind of "entitlement" most states grant to elementary and secondary education. As higher education's share of funding slips, the cost of college shifts increasingly to students and their families—raising questions about access and the consequences of privatizing public institutions of higher learning.

In 1994 the SREB Commission for Educational Quality has recommended that higher education's priority in state budgets should rise in most states during the remainder of this decade. Budget goals will vary, the Commission said in its report Changing States: Higher Education and the Public Good, ". . . states should all address the fact that a shrinking portion of most state budgets has been going for higher education."

FUNDING

BY THE YEAR 2000—

States will maintain or increase the proportion of state tax dollars for schools and colleges while emphasizing funding aimed at raising quality and productivity.

- Many SREB states have made significant efforts since the early 1980s to increase funding for schools and colleges by raising taxes, establishing a funding base for all school districts, and investing in statewide improvement programs.

- In the late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, support for elementary and secondary education slipped in one-third of the SREB states. Support for higher education slipped in two-thirds of the SREB states. Substantial state funding increases in some states, including Arkansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Tennessee may restore some of the decline in support for elementary and secondary education. This does not appear to be the case for higher education.
- When final figures are in for 1995, it is unlikely that many states will be devoting a larger share of their budgets for education than in 1985.

What are the current education funding patterns in the SREB states?

There has been dramatic growth in enrollment in several SREB states. Over 15 million students now attend public schools in the region—one million more than five years ago. Another 4.3 million students attend colleges and universities in the region—900,000 more than five years ago. One of four students lives in poverty—in Louisiana and Mississippi, more than one-third do. Schools and colleges are expected to provide improved instruction to students with more complex needs. Yet the latest national reports show that state and local government spending for education was lower at the beginning of this decade than five years earlier.

From the late 1980s to 1991, state and local spending for education grew less than overall spending in nine states (Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Virginia). Spending for education grew at a faster rate than overall spending in Florida, Louisiana, Maryland, Tennessee, and Texas—and at about the same rate in West Virginia.

Because of lag time in national reporting on education finance, these national statistics do not reflect the compounded effect of major education reforms passed in the early 1990s in states like Kentucky, Oklahoma, and Tennessee. Recent earmarked tax increases for education in Arkansas and Mississippi are also not included.

Almost 30 percent of state and local government spending in the region is for elementary, secondary, and higher education.

WHERE THE MONEY WENT

Increases in State and Local Government Spending
in the SREB States from 1988 to 1991

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Government Finances," 1987-88 and 1990-91.

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Education's share of state and local budgets averaged 29.8 percent for the four-year period from 1988 to 1991, compared to 30.2 percent for 1984-1987.

- The portion of these expenditures for higher education was 9.2 percent in 1985, 7.6 percent in 1989, and 8.4 percent in 1991.
- Expenditures for elementary and secondary education were 21.3 percent of state and local government expenditures in 1985, 21.6 percent in 1989, and 21.4 percent in 1991.

These changes may appear small, but these "small declines" amount to hundreds of millions of dollars not going toward the education of young people and adults. One-tenth of one percent of state and local government expenditures in the region in 1990-91 amounted to about $310 million. If schools had not experienced these "small declines," more than $600 million would have been available. (This is more than all SREB states are currently spending for educational technology.)

The "small decline" for higher education amounts to more than $2 billion. As the higher education share of state and local government expenditures fell, a significant portion of the cost of funding colleges and universities shifted to students and their families. Tuition now accounts for 28 percent of funding for public higher education—over $1 billion more than ten years ago, when it accounted for 21 percent.

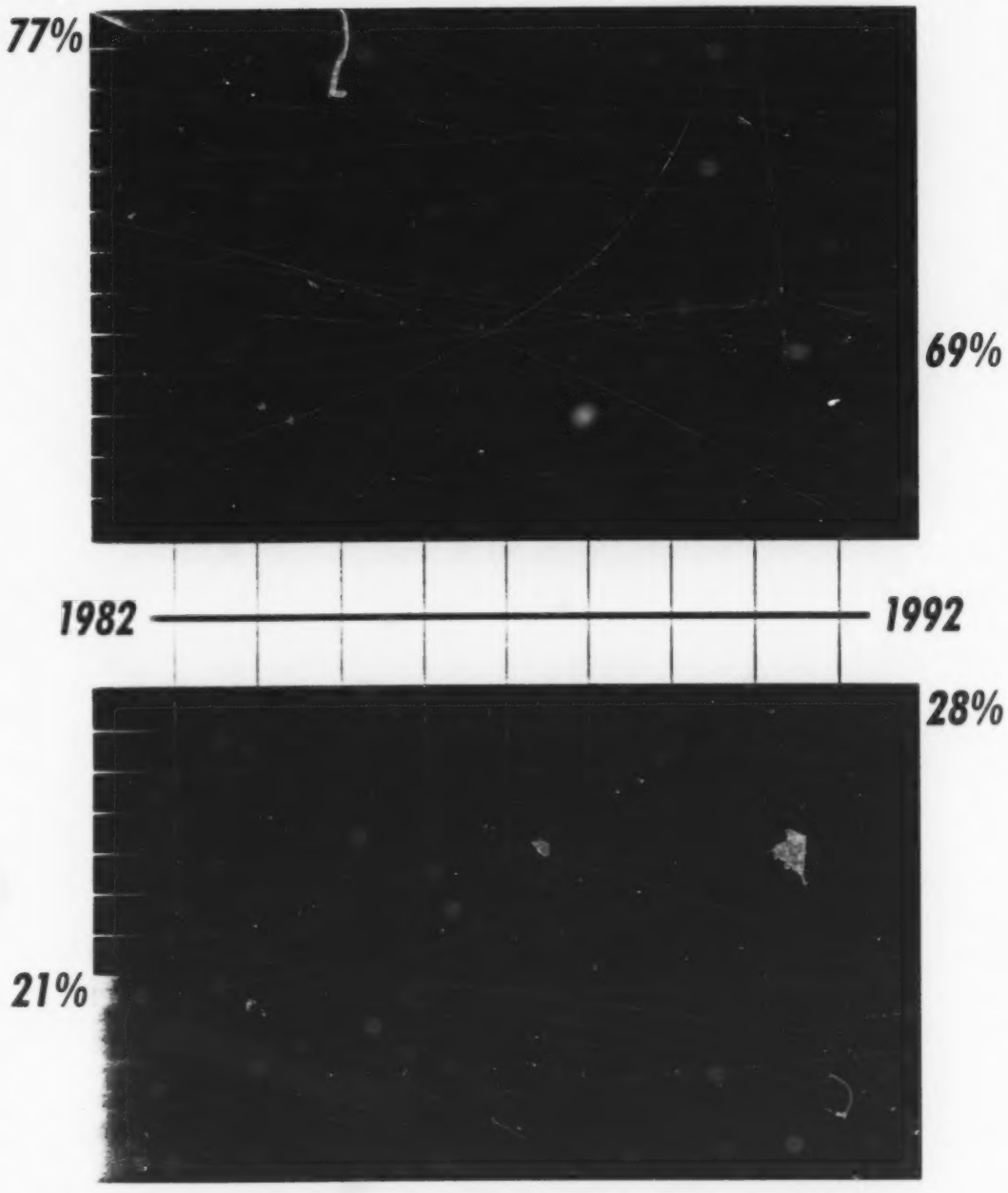
How are states using funding to raise quality and productivity?

Most SREB states have funded special initiatives to improve elementary and secondary education. These include competitive grants to improve student performance, reduce dropout rates, improve instruction, and buy special equipment for mathematics and science education and instructional technology. South Carolina's 1993 Early Childhood Development and Academic Assistance Act pools funds previously earmarked for remedial and compensatory programs. The act concentrates funding on development in the early years and on students who need extra academic assistance; it gives school districts more flexibility in spending state funds, but it also increases accountability for results.

Funding based on a college or university's performance is not widespread. Tennessee's incentive funding program, now in its 15th year, permits a campus to earn up to 5.45 percent beyond its base budget, depending on its performance on 10 indicators. Virginia's "Fund for Excellence" and Oklahoma's "Quality Initiative Grant Program" are smaller funding initiatives to promote improvements. The enrollment-driven funding formula in Kentucky will become more performance based in 1995-96. Any new funding beyond each institution's base budget will depend on how well each institution meets its goals and objectives. The Arkansas Department of Higher Education plans to allocate a portion of new funds on the basis of performance in 1995-97. Virginia's Commission on the Future of Higher Education will look at rewards and ways to promote efficiency and effectiveness.

Several states made special appropriations to higher education to fund "centers of excellence" and to create endowment funds that can be used to attract and retain outstanding faculty. Florida, North Carolina, and

WHO PAYS FOR COLLEGE?



Between 1982 and 1992, public colleges and universities in the SREB region received less of their support from state budgets and more of their support from tuition. Over the decade, tuition and fees rose from 21 to 28 percent of public college revenues. This means students and their families paid an additional $1.1 billion in tuition and fees.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Tennessee created dozens of million-dollar endowed chairs in programs that matched private funds with public funds.

To link educational financing and goals, state leaders need answers to basic questions:

- Has the state's overall spending for education increased or decreased compared to last year and the year before? How have enrollments changed?
- Is the state spending a greater or lesser share of the state's tax dollars on education?
- Is the state encouraging education to spend dollars in different ways? Do state funding policies reward schools and colleges for innovation and positive change?
- Is the state's funding for education making it possible for more students to continue their education after high school?
- Are changes in funding making a difference in what students in our schools and colleges know and can do?